

The Unseen Phenomena series

by Wildgoose1

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Summary: Life, death and everything you could possibly want in non Daria/Trent shippers

1. A New Experience

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A New Experience By Steve Mitchell

(It's a lazy Sunday afternoon in Lawndale. Jane and Daria are seen In Daria's room. Jane is busy painting a picture of Daria In Jane's typical Garb. Daria is busy looking under her bed for a video of Sick Sad World: uncut.)

Jane: Hey Daria, what do you think of this painting so far? I call it "A Change of Pace". (Daria is to busy looking under the bed to answer her) (looking down at the end of Daria that is sticking out from under the bed) Hey Daria's ass, Have you seen Daria anywhere? I tried to ask her a question but for some reason you're the only end I could get a hold of. (Daria crawls out from under the bed and gives Jane a bizarre look.) Why did that sound particularly bad.?

Daria: (cocks an eyebrow) So..Any alternate lifestyles you've been hiding from me?

Jane: (smirks) Not bloody likely.

Daria: Okay, So now that you've got my undivided attention. What's this painting you want to show me.

Jane: (turning the easel around) What do you think?

Daria: Oh I like it. I've always pictured myself as you Jane.

Jane: Oh, You mean beautiful and Talented?

Daria: No, as the sister of a guy I really like.

Jane: (smirks) You ARE a sick puppy aren't you.

Daria: And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Jane: One of the many reasons I'm so proud to be your friend. (Sighs and lays her paint brush down on the easel) So now that that's done, what do you want to do now?

Daria: I don't know. I can't find the tape so we can't watch Sick Sad World. What else is there to do?

Jane: (looks out the window) Hmm, It's a beautiful day. You could go running with me.

Daria:(frowns) No way, The last time I went running with you I almost dropped dead from trying to keep up.

Jane: All the more reason to come along. You'll get into better shape so maybe THIS time you'll only drop dead after trying to stay ahead.

Daria: Still no deal.

Jane: Damn! (Examines Daria's heart model) Okay so what then?

(Quinn pops her head in the door)

Quinn: Daria?

Daria: (perks her head up but doesn't turn around) Yes Satan? (Turns to look at Quinn) Oh sorry, I thought you were someone else. So for what reason do you darken my doorway?

Quinn: Ha, Ha Daria, very funny, listen the fashion club is coming over. We're going to have a meeting on the latest cosmetics for the upcoming millennium and we really need our privacy and stuff so could you possibly stay in your room or go out somewhere? You know just so I don't have to be seen around you. I mean you're way to unfashionable and you'd probably permanently damage my reputation.

Daria: You Know Quinn sometimes your so shallow it almost seems like depth.

Quinn: Thanks! (Daria rolls her eye's)

Daria: (glances at Jane and smirks)Hmm.. I might consider it, but you know Quinn, Favors like this don't come cheap.

Quinn: Oh come ON Daria, Do it because were sisters.

Daria: Gee Quinn, I thought we were COUSINS.

Quinn: Oh come on Daria, You CAN'T expect me to tell people you're my sister. I mean You're a brain for god's sake.

Daria: Wow, Now I'm really motivated to leave.

Jane: I thought I sensed an increase in the energy level of this room.

Quinn: So you'll leave?

Daria: Nope. I think I'll just hang around you guys for the rest of the day. You know, just to keep myself busy. Maybe I can offer my own Advice for the new millennium.

Quinn: EEWW! Unfashionable advice is definitely a Don't in the Fashion club.

Jane: Hey, Can I stay too? I'd love to hear about new cosmetics. They make for great abstract art. Hell we could be here all day on this one.

Quinn: (stomps her foot) All right, all right. Twenty?

Jane: I don't know Daria, She did cast some pretty harsh insults there.

Daria: I know. Twenty dollars couldn't possibly compensate me for such a traumatic experience. (Smirks) Make it forty.

Quinn: Twenty five.

Daria: Thirty five.

Quinn: Thirty

Daria: Done. (Quinn forks over the cash) Pleasure doing business with you.

(Cut to Daria and Jane outside in the driveway in front of Daria's car)

Jane: Hmm..I wonder if we should have held out for more.

Daria: No, I don't think we could have gotten much more out of her. My mom made her pay for her own clothes this month so she's pretty much tapped out.

Jane: And you so graciously absorbed whatever cash she had left leaving her pathetically broke.

Daria: Yea, I should feel ashamed.

Jane: So do you?

Daria: Nope, doesn't bother me one bit.

Jane: Cool, I was afraid you were getting soft on me.

Daria: No softer then titanium alloy.

(Daria and Jane get into Daria's car and close the doors)

Jane: Just out of curiosity where are we headed?

Daria: I guess we could put this new found money to good use and go for a burger.

Jane: No pizza today?

Daria: Nah, The pizza place is closed on Sunday's. Besides I was in the mood for something different anyway. (Starts the car and pulls away from the driveway)

(Cut to the local burger world)

(Daria is seen parking the car)

Daria: (as she exits the car) God I hate parallel parking.

Jane: (looks at the crummy job she did at it) I can see why. You could probably fit a motorcycle in the amount of space between your car and the curb.

Daria: Thanks Jane, Your support on the matter is overwhelming.

Jane: I know, I should probably tone it down a bit.

Daria: (rolls her eyes) Just lock the damn door.

Jane: Thy will be done M'lady.

(Jane slams the door and The both of them move to cross the street)

Jane: (once the two of them have gotten to the other side) Dammit!!

Daria: What?

Jane: I forgot my sketch book in the car. I wanted to get some caricatures of the disgruntled fry cook that works here. Daria toss me your keys.

Daria: (sighs) I'll get it. You head on in and get us a table.

Jane; (shrugs) Okey dokey then. (Heads inside the restaurant)

(Daria looks both ways and from her point of view there does not appear to be any cars coming and Daria starts across the street. Unfortunately the frames of Daria's glasses blocked her from seeing a compact car approaching from the far left and Daria is struck by the car. She fly's up over the hood and caves in the windshield then rolls off about twenty five yards down the middle of the street.)

(Daria from her point of view on the ground see's Jane come running out of the restaurant yelling but not to where she is)

Jane: OH MY GOD DARIA!! (Looks at a bystander) Call 911 for god's sake . Don't just stand there. (The bystander whips out a cell phone and begins to dial)

Daria: (From her POV gets up and calls to Jane) Jane, I'm over here. (Jane doesn't hear her) Yo Jane. It's okay I'm fine. (Jane still does not hear her) Hello! Are you deaf or something? (Daria walks over to where Jane is kneeling and comes to a slow stop as a horrified look comes over her face. Jane is kneeling on the ground in front of the car next to Daria's bloodied body.) (Slowly) Oh my god!

(an ambulance is heard in the distance as police cars begin to arrive)

(Cut to inside the ambulance as it speeds to the hospital) (Jane is sitting across from the EMT's as they do their work on Daria)

Jane: (steady stream of tears running down her cheek) Come on Daria, Don't leave me. You're stronger than any of us. Fight for me.

(That which is truly Daria is sitting on the other side of the ambulance attempting to make sense of everything that has happened so far)

Daria: Jane this can't be possible, I'm right here. (Waves frantically at Jane) I don't believe this, It was bad enough when people TREATED me like I was invisible.

(Cut to the hospital a few hours later)

(Daria's body has been placed on life support. Jane along with Daria's family are sitting in the waiting room as the doctor attempts to explain the situation to them)

Helen: (bursting into tears) Oh my god, My little girl. How could this happen to her?

Jake: (to the doctor while holding Helen) Isn't there ANYTHING you can do?

Dr. Phillips: At the moment we're doing everything in our power. She's sustained some pretty substantial injuries and at the moment she's not breathing on her own.

Jane: Is she going to make it?

Dr. Phillips: (sighs and looks down) I don't know, The whole situation is fluid right now. It could go either way so it's a wait and see deal.

Jake: (grabs hold of the doctors coat) Listen Doc. I don't care how much it costs, I'll give you everything I've got just don't let her die.

Dr. Phillips: (calmly) Mr. Morgendorffer, I assure you I will do everything in my power to prevent that. Now would you please release me?

Jake: (releases him) I'm sorry Doc. I just...I just don't know what to do right now. (Places his head in his hands)

Quinn: Can we go in to see her?

Dr, Phillips: (looks down and sighs) I realize how you all must feel but for right now, however I think the best thing for her at this moment is rest. (Thinks for a moment) I don't know where you stand on religion but if it brings you any peace of mind there's a church on the second floor. Every little bit helps.

Helen: (anger in her voice) Doctor I have to see my daughter. I'm not going to stand here while you people let her slip through the cracks. (Begins to yell) Now you let me in there Or I swear to god I'll...

Dr. Phillips: All right, all right, I 'll let you and Jake in, but one at a time.

Helen: (calms down realizing the scene she was making) We appreciate that Dr. I'm sorry, I just want to stay as close as possible to my daughter.

Dr. Phillips: No problem, I'll arrange for the nurses to allow you all to stay past visiting ours if you like.

Helen: Thank you doctor.

(Helen Walks into Daria's room slowly as looks at her daughter lying motionless in her bed with several machines hooked up to her.)

(Doctor Phillips walks off to the nurses station and begins jotting things down on Daria's chart)

Daria: Hmm...it sounds like mom is going to get mushy on me. This COULD be interesting. (Follows Helen into the room)

(Helen moves next to Daria's bed and sits down as she begins to talk out loud)

Helen: (placing her hand on Daia's) Oh sweetie....I...uh..(Laughs nervously) I've never been good at telling people how I really feel, I guess it sort of runs in the family. (Beat) I know I've never really dedicated enough time to you, spending to much time with work and everything. That never meant that I didn't care, I just know that your more self sufficient than your sister. You always have been. (Moment of silence) I...I'm sorry for pushing you to be someone your not. I just want you to live up to your potential. (Sniffs) I hope you can hear me. (Gets up and leaves the room) (Daria does not immediately follow)

Daria: (looks down as her mother leaves) Aw hell..

Helen: (rubs her eye's as she comes out of Daria's room) God I need some coffee. Walk with me Jakie, I don't want to be alone right now. (The two of them walk off to find a coffee machine)

(Daria exits the room and continues listening to people talk about her) (a bell is heard and Trent is seen coming out of the elevator and walking toward the group)

Daria: (turns and looks) Oh Thank god, Trent you've got to talk to these people. Tell them I'm all right. (Trent continues to walk toward her and then through her still heading to where Jane is

sitting) (amazed) He went right through me... like I wasn't even there. Great, It's not bad enough that the popular people ignore me. Now the living are ignoring me.

Trent: Hey Janie, How is she?

Jane: Not good, she's on life support.

Trent: Aw man...How could this have happened.

Quinn:(snaps) Yea, Jane couldn't you have looked out for her or something. I mean god, you're her friend.

Jane: (defensively)What?? I was in the restaurant for crying out loud what did you want me to do?

Quinn: If it weren't for YOU she wouldn't be lying there all gross and unconscious and stuff.

Daria: (talking to herself) Quinn actually gives a damn? Now that IS a news flash.

Jane: Me? I didn't have anything to do with the accident. It was that stupid drivers fault, if you want to rip somebodys head off and crap down their neck then go do it to him.

Quinn: You're the one who sent her to go get your stupid book.

Jane: I didn't SEND her to get anything. She offered to go get it.

Quinn: Well you still let her go. It should have been YOU! (An extremely hurt look comes over Jane's face followed by one of anger)

Jane: (points at Quinn) Now you listen to me you shallow, superficial, pompous little shit. Daria is my best friend, and if you think I'd allow anything to happen to her If I could prevent it Then you obviously don't understand how careful Daria is at choosing her friends. Now you either shut the hell up or...

Trent: Whoa! Take it easy, your all coming apart at the seams. This isn't doing Daria a bit of good you know.

Daria: (Is still watching) (smiles) So...not so oblivious as we were led to believe. So much the better. (Looks at Jane with her usual deadpan expression) Go home Jane, I Don't think I'll be going anywhere.

Quinn:(looks down) Sorry Jane, it's just...well, I've never been able to tell her how I feel, you know, because we're so different and all. I guess I'm being a little protective. She's the only big sister I have. I actually kind of admire her. She's so smart and witty, all I have is my popularity which isn't worth a whole lot when you think about it. (Laughs weakly) It'd be kind of awkward if she knew we were acting like this because of her. You won't tell her what I said will you?

Daria: (looking at Quinn) (smiles) She doesn't need to Quinn, But

thanks anyway.

Jane: You know, normally I couldn't wait to tell her something embarrassing about you. But under the circumstances...I'll sit on this one.

Quinn: Thanks Jane.

Trent: (sits down thoughtfully) She let me teach her to play the guitar a little bit.

Jane: (surprised) She did? Whoa, when was this?

Trent: A few months ago.

Jane: You and Daria were alone in the basement together. Well this I'd defiantly like to hear.

Trent: It's kind of a long story.

Jane: Yea well, it looks like we have a little time to waste here so talk away.

Trent: Hmm..I guess. Like I said it was a few months ago...

(Fade to Trent's basement earlier in the year)

(Trent is sitting on some boxes with his guitar in hand. Daria comes down the basement stairs while yelling back to Jane who is in the kitchen)

Daria: Where the hell did you say those cans of paint were?

Trent: Hey Daria

Daria: (Turns to see him and blushes as if she had been caught playing with herself or something) Um..uh.. Hey Trent, I didn't know you were down here. Usually we can hear you down the block.

Trent: (laughs/coughs) Yea, that amp STILL makes the people down the street wet the bed. (Cocks an eyebrow) So what brings YOU down here?

Daria: Jane ran out of paint so she asked if I could come down here and find the spare cans she has down here.

Trent: Cool.

Daria: (looks at a piece of paper Trent is holding) Writing a new song?

Trent: I WAS, (reluctantly) I can't seem to think of any lyrics at the moment though.

Daria: Oh, sorry to hear that Trent.

Trent: Yea, This is all I've written so far. It's not much.

Daria: (Reading aloud) Silence. That's it? Just one word?

Trent: I couldn't think of anything to go with it.(looks at her for a moment) Do you play at all Daria?

Daria: Not really, I learned a little at camp when I was a kid but I wasn't any good at it.

Trent: To bad. (Thinks for a moment) Want to see if you still remember any of it?

Daria: No, That's okay Trent. I'd probably send you screaming into the night.

Trent: (laugh/coughs) Are you sure? Even if your rusty I doubt your that bad.

Daria: Don't be so sure about that.

Trent: Come on, Give it a try Daria. I'd like to hear you play.

Daria: (sighs) Okay, you asked for it. (Walks over to Trent and picks up the guitar) (she then begins to play a few cords)

Trent: Hmm, not bad. Try this. (Trent stands behind her, holds her hands and shows her a better technique to playing the strings)

Daria: (Blushes as Trent guides her hands through the chords) Your good at this. You should teach.

Trent: (Laugh/coughs) Nah, I still can't master that open D tuning.

Daria: I hadn't noticed.

(Fade back to the hospital)

Jane: Wait a minute! You were standing behind Daria practically holding her in your arms. You saw the way her face lit up, You KNOW how she feels about you... and NOTHING happened?

Trent: (shrugs his shoulders) What did you WANT to happen?

Jane: (throws her arms up) Oh my GOD you are so oblivious Trent.

Trent: No...I'm not. I just make it a point not to make moves on someone when they're most vulnerable.

(Daria as she is listening raises an eyebrow in surprise then slowly smiles)

Quinn: Wait, I have a story.

Jane: (cups her face in her hands) Oh god no...

Trent: I think now's a good time for me to spontaneously fall into a deep coma like sleep. Have fun Janie. (Trent curls up in his chair and drops off to sleep just like that)

Jane: How DOES he do that?

Quinn: (obliviously starts talking up a storm) It was that time when Daria let me borrow her outfit for the fashion don't party. God, I can't believe I wore that thing. Anyway, as unfashionable as that thing is it was actually comfortable. And I thought... (cut to Later that night)

(Jake and Helen are seen sleeping on couches rather uncomfortably)
(Trent has long since been bored to sleep from Quinn's story telling.
Jane Is just falling asleep even though Quinn is STILL Talking)

Jane: Quinn...to boring...must resist. (The sound of Jane snoring is then heard)

Quinn: Jane? Are you asleep or something? GOD, you people are rude. (Looks around and spots a nearby doctor) Excuse me, Can you get me a soda?

(Daria is still standing nearby watching)

Daria: (to herself) I can't believe everybody is making this big of a fuss over me. I have to admit though it IS rather comforting.

Voice: What is?

Daria:(Jumps) Aahh!! (Daria turns to see a tall man wearing Khaki's, a same color shirt, black boots and a black ankle length duster.)
Don't DO that. (Thinks for a moment) Wait..you can see me?

Man: (chuckles) Of coarse I can. I can see you, hear you, Pat you on the head if I wanted to

Daria: Gee, thanks for the vote of confidence. I guess that means your in the same boat as me then huh?

Man:(thinks for a moment) Sort of but not exactly.

Daria: (frowns) What the hell does that mean?

Man: (doesn't answer the question but turns and Looks at everyone sleeping in the waiting room) What's going on?

Daria: I had an accident.

Voice: I'm sorry to hear that. (Points to Jane, Quinn, Helen, Jake, and Trent sleeping in the waiting room) They're your family?

Daria: And friends. (Thinks for a moment) So what's with the twenty questions?

Voice: Just taking in the situation.

Daria: Uh huh...I don't suppose your going to tell me who you are? Or do I get to read your mind.

Man: (Looks lost in thought for a moment) Huh? Oh I'm sorry. (Extends his hand to shake Daria's) I'm the angel of death. (Daria just looks

at him for a moment) What? You were expecting the grim reaper?

Daria: Uh..no, I just didn't think...

Death: That I'd look like an average person? Just about everything you've heard is stereotypical of something people don't understand.

Daria: Um..all right then. What about the light that people say they walk toward at the end of a tunnel?

Death: (chuckles) That's a trick I use on people who aren't exactly the brightest crayon in the box. You know, when It's not their time yet. I hold a flashlight in front of their face so they can't see anything and I lure them back to their own bodies. Daria: Um..okay. Anyway what I was originally going to say was that...

Death: That you didn't think you'd be seeing me so soon?

Daria: Um..yea. I mean I have to admit, I thought there would be a little more to my life than THIS.

Death: Life is what YOU make it Daria.

Daria: Great, Then what you're saying is that I'm responsible for making my OWN life a living hell.

Death: Well, Not entirely. The vast hords of morons that are being born into this world Do play a large roll in it.

Daria: A fact That I am already well aware of. (Beat) So is death your first or last name?

Death: Neither actually, It's just a job title. You can call me Paul.

Daria: Um...okay, Paul. So if you're here talking to me, then I take it I'm dead?

Paul: Funny you should mention that. (Whips out a pocket size computer) Last time I checked, you and I didn't have an appointment for (looks at the screen and whistles) Oh, a good long time.

Daria: Meaning?

Paul: Meaning That this isn't your time. (Sighs) But....given that you've been out of your body for a prolonged period of time without even attempting to return leaves me with a decision to make.

Daria: (frowns) And that would be what?

Paul: Well, you see we have certain procedures to follow in cases like this. After such an incident the person is given a certain amount of time to return to their life. If they don't I have to decide whether to take them early or give them another chance. Frankly Daria, your grace period has expired.

Daria: Wait, You mean I could have ended this nightmare at any time?

Paul: (shakes his head yes) You Know Daria, Your injuries weren't immediately life threatening. You made it to the hospital in plenty of time. The only difference is that you received a large enough jolt to toss you out of your own body. (Thinks for a moment) Typically people are so eager to go on living that they don't require my intervention. But I guess that's not the case here.

Daria: No that's NOT the case here, I Do wish to go on living. Preferably without Quinn in my way all the time but I'll take what I can get.

Paul: (Chuckles) She IS a pain in the butt isn't she. (Thinks for a moment) Think of her as god's way of keeping you humble and appreciative of what you have.

Daria: I guess. (Thinks for a moment) You said we didn't have an appointment for a good long time. About how long is that?

Paul: Ever watch "The Highlander"?

Daria: You've got to be KIDDING!

Paul: Yes.. I am. Seriously though, I can't divulge that information.

Daria: (looks down) Damn!

(They both walk into Daria's hospital room)

Daria: So how's this work?

Paul: Just lie down into your body, Simple as that.

Daria: Cool.(moves toward her body)

Paul: Just be ready to feel everything you've been through. That's the only plus side to being cut off from your own body, You can't feel the injuries.

Daria: Wonderful, I just hope they have a lot of pain killers to shoot me up with. (Takes another step toward her body)

Paul: Oh and Daria, one more thing.

Daria:(turns to face him) Yes?

Paul: Tell Jake to lay off the guacamole, I usually don't make it a habit of giving out extensions but he was so adamant about seeing you walk down the isle someday, I guess my heart just went out to him and I told him I'd wait until an undetermined amount of years after that event. Depends on how his life goes.

Daria: I see. What is it with him and my getting married someday? I don't even have a boyfriend.

Paul: I know...but things change. Besides he's so proud of who you've become I just couldn't take that from him.

Daria: (sighs) Well, I guess the man's got to live for something. I'm

not making any promises though. (Beat) Hey wait, Does that mean that if I don't get married someday then he'll live forever?

Paul: (frowns) Don't push your luck.

Daria: Damn! And I could have spent the rest of my life happy too.

Paul: (looks at Daria) Ready?

Daria: Raring. (Daria lies down on her body and the scene dissolves to bright white light.

(Cut to The waiting room in the morning)

Nurse: (shakes Helen) Ms. Morgendorffer?

Helen: Huh... what?

Nurse: Ms. Morgendorffer...Your daughter is awake and has been taken off life support.

Helen: (wide eyed) What! (Attempts to jump up and run to Daria's room) Ow! Damn, cramp..ow I think I pulled something. (She eventually makes it to Daria's room to see her lying in her bed with her eye's open.)

Daria: (turns her head slowly) (Mutters) Hey mom. (Helen runs up and gives Daria a stiff hug) Ahh! Road rash...road rash, Don't touch.

Helen: (let's go) I'm sorry sweetie, It's just..I'm so glad your okay.

(Jane, Trent and Jake stand in the doorway and watch Helen make a huge fuss over Daria).

Jane: (turns to Trent) Got a Polaroid?

(Cut to Later that Day)

Dr. Phillips: Frankly Daria, I'm amazed you came around so quickly. Typically it takes someone weeks to come off life support.

Daria: I guess I'm just one of those special patients that defy the laws of medicine.

Dr. Phillips: (Finishes jotting something down on Daria's chart) I'll stop back later to check up on you.

Jane: (Knocks on the door frame to Daria's room) Hey Daria, How are you feeling today?

Daria:(groans) Like I've been run over.

Jane: And you dress the part too. (Moves to sit on the edge of Daria's bed) What did the doctor say?

Daria: I've got a nasty concussion, my left leg is broken and I've got road rash and bruises all over... and This hospital doesn't get

Sick Sad World on the Tv.

Jane: Ooh! You are in hell aren't you.

Daria: No, But it's a close second.

Jane: I can't see how. (Looks at Daria's injuries) Geez Daria, You never do anything on a small scale do you.

Daria: Who else do you know that can turn getting a sketch book into a circus event.

Jane: (chuckles) What can I say, you're a pro. By the way...Trent's been asking about you.

Daria: Trent?

Jane: Yea, You know, about five foot ten, black mussed hair, falls asleep a lot.

Daria: I'm familiar with his appearance thank you.

Jane: So anyway, he was really concerned. Started talking some jibberish about you learning to play the guitar.

Daria: (smiles) I know...he doesn't like to make moves on people when they're most vulnerable.

Jane: (surprised) Whoa, He told you that?

Daria: Not directly, I'm just a good eavesdropper.

Jane: (amused) I see. So, Any dreams run through your head while you were out?

Daria: Yea, I had an interesting chat with the angel of death.

Jane: Really? What did he look like? Let me guess, a skull for a face and a black holocaust cloak right?

Daria: Actually, he was about six foot four with Long brown hair and a fair complexion. He was wearing Khaki's, boots, and an ankle length duster.

Jane: Whoa, Death sounds cute. So what did you talk about?

Daria: Oh, not much. We mostly listened to you guys talking in the waiting room.

(An extremely amused expression comes over Jane's face)

Roll ending credits: An comments may be directed to
wildgoose@prodigy.com

(Show alter ego's of the characters)

Jane as a race car driver

Quinn as a beanie baby

Jake as Mills Lane from Celebrity Death Match

Helen as a Smurf

Daria as a police officer

Mr. O'Neill as Jean Luc Picard

Mr. Dimartino as MIB

Ms. Li as a mug shot

Jodie as a wookiee

Mack as a grateful dead bear

Ms. Barch as a knight

Mr. Dimartino as Peter Pan

Ms. Defoe as an expectant mother

2. All Good Things

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All Good Things By Steve Mitchell

Dear Diary, It's been two days since Quinn's death and This is still one of the few ways I can find solace. It's still as fresh in my memory as the day my world, what little of it I had, came crashing down on me in a way I never would have imagined possible. Jane has done her best to console me in my loss, strange as it may be. I never fathomed a time this soon in my life when I would mourn over the fact that I would never see Quinn again. Maria, a blind student new to the school whom I befriended not more than three weeks ago, has been as close a friend as Jane in my time of need regardless of how little we've known each other. It's strange, that in one moment you can find out just exactly how far real friendship goes, no matter how long you've known the person. I consider both Jane and Maria equally good friends but I guess in some ways, at least for the present time, I feel closer to Maria. Not because she is a better friend, or has ever been there for me as much as Jane, but because it was her seeing eye dog Cheyenne who was able to bring Quinn at least some sort of retribution for the heinous act that was committed against her. My mom has been feverishly making the preparations for the funeral but still, she finds the time to walk into Quinn's room and cry her eyes out at least twice an hour. It's strange to me as I've never seen her actually grief stricken even at her own mothers funeral, and what's worse is the fact that from time to time she turns to me as an outlet for both her sorrow and her pent up anger over the fact that there is nothing to be done legally. The person who would have been held accountable is no longer living as I mentioned before due to Maria's dog. I can't say that I hold my mom's occasional outbursts towards me against her, god knows she has good cause to be frustrated and angry, I know I am. I'm just not sure of the best way to vent these emotions. I've never been good at showing emotion toward anybody to

say nothing about my family. My dad on the other hand is less composed, He just sits on the couch most of the day occasionally helping my mom with the arrangements until she starts to turn her pent up frustrations on him instead of me. But for the most part he sits there looking through all the photo albums, just staring at the pictures of his youngest Daughter. From time to time when he comes across a picture that sparks a vivid memory he breaks down into tears uncontrollably. I can't say I blame him with all the other childhood emotions he has pent up in the same cluttered space as all of his current thoughts and memories. I on the other hand...am a different story. I was there in the mall when this, what has literally become hell for me, all happened. I didn't have as much money as she was asking for but why...why didn't I just give in and let her use my mac card so she could go to the teller machine instead of the mall's own bank lobby? A thought which I have been turning over and over in my mind for the last two day's relentlessly. Of all the times I said I hated Quinn, I never thought there would be a time when I wished I could take them all back, just long enough to say either I'm sorry, or just that behind all the sarcasm and bitterness that we had shared through the years. I was still proud enough of her to be able to acknowledge her as my sister despite all the times she told her friends that I was her cousin or not even related. My god, I'm actually going to miss that.

(Daria's thought's seemed to run miles per minute as she closed her diary slowly watching the pages turn one by one. She would need a new notebook to keep her thoughts in soon, hopefully one that she would not have to keep as well hidden. Then again, who would she need to hide it from? Quinn was the only one ever really interested in reading her diary. Helen was always too busy with work to go looking for it and Jake...well, he was more oblivious than Trent ever was.)

Daria: (out loud) Oblivious...that's almost become an irony with Trent. He pays more attention to me now than I ever tried to pay to him. Why does it always take a tragedy to get someone's attention? (She shoved the diary back underneath her bed and listened as her mother padded down the hall to cry in Quinn's bedroom once more) (The Phone rings and Daria reluctantly picks up) Speak or forever hold your peace.

(Split screen)

Jane: Hey there, I just wanted to see how my partner in crime was holding up. So how are you?

Daria: (sniffs trying to hold back a few tears of her own) The same as usual, a little sarcasm, a lot of cynicism and as always everybody mistakes me for a misery chick.

Jane: (Cracks a weak smile) Hmm...for a moment there I almost believed you Daria. You feel like getting a bite to eat ? Maybe crying on the shoulder of a few friends...The last time I checked I was available for such friendly services, as well as Maria and hey if you need it, I'm sure Cheyenne wouldn't mind either. Of course she doesn't have much of a shoulder and the one she does have is covered with fur. But hey, it's there if you need it.

Daria: (almost laughs) Yea...Yea, I could use something to eat. For once I actually WANT to get out of my room. I've been here all day.

Jane: Doing what?

Daria: One of the things I do best and usually get mocked for.

Jane: Ah...thinking. It does the soul good.

Daria: (Takes her glasses off and places them on the night stand)
Yea...it does. It also brings up a lot of pain and grief.

Jane: That's to be expected. Remember Daria, that's not something you just get over, it takes a good amount of time and support from your friends. And dammit, that's what we're here for. Now get your butt up and meet us at the pizza place, we have a lot of talking to do.

Daria: I'll see you there Jane. (Hangs up and just sits there for a moment looking at the phone) Friends...Yes, that's what I need.
Welcome company.

(Daria heads down the stairs and prepares to go out the front door.
Helen calls down the stairs after her just as she is about to close
the door quietly behind her)

Helen: Daria? Where are you heading off to at this hour?

Daria: (sighs) I'm going to meet Jane, I just need to get out of the house for a while.

Helen: (warning) Daria, I don't want you out this late.

Daria: Mom, it's five thirty. Has my curfew suddenly been moved back?

Helen: (harshly) Daria, don't argue. I don't want you out right now, for god's sake what if there's another person like....

Daria: Like...the guy who killed Quinn. (Daria sighs) I'll be with Jane and Maria, mom. For god's sake I'll be fine.

Helen: (Starting to yell) There's no but's about it young lady, your not going out and that's final!

Daria: (glares) Final...as in that's all your going to say on the matter? Good, it's about time you stopped directing your anger toward me. I'm eighteen years old mom, I can take care of myself for god's sake. (Slams the door behind her as she leaves)

Helen: (looks down at the floor sulkingly) Good one Morgendorffer, drive your sole remaining daughter away why don't you.

(Cut to Daria driving down the road in her escort. The road is dark and at the moment Daria's mind is wandering)

(Images of Stacy being escorted out of the mall bank, a police officers coat masks her shoulders. She is crying in fear uncontrollably as blood can be seen splattered all over the front of her outfit. Apparently she had been standing just behind Quinn when

it happened. Flash to another image of Cheyenne darting fiercely toward a man in a camouflage jacket wielding a gun wildly after running out of the bank. He seemed to be blinded for the moment as a exploding dye pack hidden in the money he had taken from the bank went off in his face. The dog charged at the man knocking him down and seizing his neck in her powerful jaws, piecing the jugular and killing the man in moments.)

(The honk of a car horn is heard and Daria snaps out of her daze. She is now stopped at a traffic light which has just turned green and the car behind her honking signaling for her to go.)

Daria: (panting and gripping the steering wheel as a single tear runs down her cheek) Oh god, I don't know if I can get through this. (The car behind her honks again and Daria takes her foot off the brake and continues down the road.)

(Cut to the pizza shop where Jane and Maria were waiting readily for Daria at a table with pizza ready)

Jane: (after a while, she Notices Daria staring off into space) So Daria...what have you learned from staring at your pizza?

Daria: Huh? What?

Maria: She said you haven't touched your pizza in so long, Cheyenne is starting to eye it up. (With this the hundred and fifty pound German shepherd walks up to Daria and puts her head in Daria's lap and stares up at her with those big brown sad looking eyes.)

Daria: That's okay, I don't feel like eating any more. (Cheyenne barks seemingly with joy and jumps up stealing the slice of pizza off the table and devouring it.)

Jane: What table manners that dog has.

Maria: (smirks) You should see her at home.

Jane: So should you.

Maria: Touche` Jane.

Jane: (changing the subject) I went to see Stacy today.

Daria: (looks up from the table) How is she taking all of this?

Jane: Not well, She was curled up in a corner of her room. Wouldn't speak, just kept crying uncontrollably.

Maria: Who's Stacy?

Jane: One of the four fashion fiends, and the only one out of the group who was actually Quinn's friend. She also happened to be right behind Quinn when it happened, got splattered with blood and everything.

Maria: So THAT was the person the cops escorted out. Jesus, can you imagine what something like that can do to a person?

Jane: Why yes, yes I can. I saw her first hand remember?

Maria: (Apologetically) I didn't mean it like that.

Jane: I know, I'm sorry. It just came out,...you know what? Just pass me some salt with my foot and I'll make a meal of it.

Maria: Don't withdraw from the conversation on us Daria, if you want to get past this you'll have to talk about it at some point. It might as well be while your with friends.

Daria: (extremely thoughtful) Mmm..yea, I guess. I keep having these flashbacks.

Jane: (attempting to cheer her friend up) Your not inhaling the fumes from my paints are you?

Daria: No, but that's starting to sound like a good idea, Everything I saw haunts me. I was driving over here and I kept seeing images of Stacy splattered with blood and being escorted out of the bank. Then came Cheyenne attacking that nut...and last night, it was The police unzipping the body bag so I could identify Quinn.

Maria: (shakes her head) Damn, I don't think I could have handled something like that.

Daria: I can't say I handled it all that well myself, I had to run to the bathroom to vomit.

Jane: (looks at her pizza and feeds it to the dog) Well NOW I've lost my appetite.

Daria: Yea, contagious isn't it? (Several moments of silence follow)

Maria: (bluntly) Daria, can you describe what happened for me?

Jane: Uh...Maria, you were there. So was I, remember.

Maria: I only heard the commotion before Cheyenne took off after that guy. I can't see what's going on around me, or did you forget?

Jane: No...it's uh. I didn't think about it, sorry. I've just got a lot on my mind.

Maria: It's cool, do you want pepper with your foot this time?.
(beat) So are you up to it Daria?

Daria: I'll try, but if I break down, don't push the issue any further.

Maria: Deal.

(Daria begins to talk and the seen blurs and then fades back in to the interior of the mall two days ago)

(Show inside the mall of the millennium)

(Daria, Jane, Maria, and her dog Cheyenne are walking from a restaurant to a table in the mall's food court. Jane carries Maria's tray as Maria, who happens to be dressed in black jeans wearing a light blue turtleneck sweater, holds onto the leash attached to her guide dog.)

Daria: (To Maria once they've sat down at a table) I can't get over how much you can eat, don't you ever gain weight?

Maria: Not really, which is about as much to my surprise as it is to my family. I'm actually at an ideal weight for my height, according to the doctor at least.

Jane: Which is what now, about five nine?

Maria: Try six four.

Jane: (Gawks) Good god woman, you're a damned tree.

Daria: A blind tree, but a tree none the less.

Maria: (chuckles) You get used to it. The hard part is looking out for people and objects that are a lot shorter than I am.

Jane: Which for you is just about everybody, I imagine. Would you mind if I take a look at your glasses?

Maria: I don't see why not, just be careful with them, I really like that pair. (She removes a pair of small round wire framed super dark glasses from her eyes revealing the two hazel orbs that under normal circumstances would have allowed her to view the world around her and holds the glasses out to where she thinks Jane is.)

Jane: Actually I'm a little more to the left. (Maria swings her arm to the left and catches Jane's head.) OW! That's a little TOO far.

Maria: Well, if you would talk more I'd know just where you were.

Daria: (smirks) She's got you there Jane.

Jane: Yea, yea. (Examines the glasses and tries them on) How can you see with these? (Realizes what she just said) Shut up...just let me burn in my embarrassment. (Hands the glasses back to Maria)

Maria: (replaces her glasses while trying not to laugh at her) It's cool, don't worry about it. (Reaches into her pocket, withdraws a scrunchie, and proceeds to tie back her scarlet red hair) So what do you guys do besides consume pizza and occasionally visit the mall for art supplies?

Daria: Mostly just hang around Jane's house. Occasionally we go out at night and fight crime with the "Mystery Men"(c) but that's mostly in our spare time. Right now our schedules are just too busy for any extracurricular activities.

Jane: Though her mom DOES try to encourage her to take part in those superficial activities at school, but so far Helen has been unsuccessful, Daria's quite wily like her artistic friend. (Holds her

pinky finger to the corner of her lips like Dr. Evil)

Maria: (frowns) What the hell is that smell?

Jane: (Sniffs the air) I don't smell anything, other than usual stuff you smell at the food court that is.

Maria: It's not that...It's coming from that direction. (Points outside the food court to the mall) It smells like...a combination of perfume, a whole hell of a lot of hair spray and cosmetics.

Daria: (looks to where Maria pointed to see Quinn and Stacy walking out of Cashemans) Oh god, and the day was going so well.

Jane: Well I'll be damned, if it isn't the better half of the fashion club. That's Quite a sniffer you've got there.

Maria: You'd be surprised how nasty a combination of hair spray and perfume can smell like to somebody like me.

Jane: So tell me, is your hearing just as good?

Daria: Probably better than average I would imagine.

Maria: Hurry up and eat your food Daria, I can't stand the sound of your stomach growling any more. (Daria blushes as Maria smirks) The fashion club? That's that shallow group of nutcase's who go around criticizing the clothes everybody is wearing isn't it?

Daria: That's the one.

Maria: I hate those people, one of them told me my glasses went out of fashion back in the eighties.

Jane: And Daria's sister just happens to be vice president of that little band of socialites.

Maria: (shakes her head) Please accept my condolences.

Daria: Thanks, I'll need them to keep my sanity until I can leave the house and get a place of my own.

Jane: And speaking of said fashion fiends, here they come now.

Daria: (looks up at the ceiling) God, why do you torture me like this?

Maria: If he answers, ask him what he did with my vision. It wasn't included in the package when I was born. (Jane chuckles) What? Maybe I'm still under warranty or something.

Quinn: (Approaches the table) Oh HI Daria, I didn't think I'd ever see you in the mall more than once in MY lifetime.

Daria: Really? Who's life time did you think I would use to appear in the mall?

Jane: Maybe she thinks you just appear in the mall to wandering strangers like those virgin Mary sightings.

Quinn: Ha ha Jane, Very funny.

Jane: (shrugs) I thought it was.

Quinn: (looks over to Marie and see's the dog) Eww, gross! What's THAT thing doing in here.

Maria: (as her dog lets out a low growl) That THING as you call it is my seeing eye dog, who unlike YOU has a legitimate purpose for being here.

Quinn: WHATEVER!

Daria: Do you have something against dogs Quinn? I'd think you would have to be an animal person to want to work in a pet store. Or did you forget the time mom made us get jobs?

Maria: Actually... There's another reason for that.

Daria: Can't wait to hear it.

Maria: Remember when I said one of the fashion club members criticized my glasses? Well, I think it was your sister.

Daria: Yea, so?

Maria: Cheyenne is very protective of me, and well...she took it upon herself to critique` Quinn's pants after her little comment.

Jane: Wait, by critique` you mean....

Maria: Oh yea, it sounded like she had been holding it for a while too.

Jane: (bursts into laughter and begins pounding on the table) And....me and my Polaroid were nowhere to be found? Oh god, that's too precious a moment to miss. I'll have to torture myself for it.

Quinn: Oh shut up weird girl! (Turns to Daria) Listen Daria, can I borrow your mac card? Mine hasn't come in the mail yet.

Daria: No way Quinn, I keep my account open by SAVING money. Not handing it all over to you to go on a shopping spree.

Quinn: God Daria, I Don't need all of it. Just enough to get this new outfit for the homecoming dance next week. I don't have anything to wear that everybody hasn't already seen me in. Come on Daria, it's an emergency.

Jane: Oh, if it's an emergency. (Pretends to dig into her pocket)

Daria: (Sighs deeply) Quinn, I'm not going to give you my MAC card...but, I MIGHT withdraw some money FOR you. You realize of coarse that any money I LEND to you is a loan repayable with a nominal interest charge.

Quinn: Um..okay, how much?

Daria: Twenty percent.

Quinn: Give me a break Daria, I'm your sis...uh cousin.

Daria: And just for that, make it twenty five percent.

Quinn: Ooh..fine, but I hope you realize your charging me money.

Daria: (Smirks) That's the best part Quinn. And how much pray tell does this outfit cost?

Quinn: That's the really great part of it all. It's on sale at Cashemans, only Four hundred dollars.

Daria: (eyes widen) WHOA!! Quinn, there's no way I'm giving you four hundred dollars. I don't even HAVE that much in my checking account. I just payed my car insurance for god's sake.

Quinn: But you've GOT to, don't you have money stashed away for some cabin or something?

Daria: Quinn, that's all locked up in savings bonds and even if I could touch...Wait a minute. How the hell did YOU know about that?

Quinn: (tries to look innocent) I sort of found that pillow of yours a few years ago and just happened to look inside.

Daria: And of coarse if I had counted it, all of it would still be there right?

Quinn: Of coarse Daria, I 'm not like that.

Daria: Well, either way Quinn I can't help you. You'll just have to go to the mall's bank and use your own money.

Quinn: Eww, but there's all those people waiting in line in there and some of them smell like construction workers.

Jane: That's probably just the cologne the bankers wear to frighten off people who want loans.

Maria: Or maybe the bank president has just worked up a sweat from rolling around in the money naked. (Daria, Quinn, and Jane all look at Maria in disgust)

Jane: That's... very nasty Maria.

Maria: What? My imagination is the only thing visual going for me at the moment.

Quinn: (turns to Daria) Anyway, thanks for nothing Daria. (Turns to Stacy) Come on Stacy, we'll just have to do this the hard way. (They both walk off toward the bank several stores outside the food court)

Stacy: By Daria.

Daria: (waves blindly as she turns back to her food) Mm..bye.

(A few minutes pass before anyone looks up from their food again)

Jane: I actually think she's mad at you Daria.

Daria: That doesn't bother me, I WAS going to help her but she wanted more than I have in my account.

Maria: So what DOES bother you? Just out of curiosity.

Daria: What bothers me is the fact that she's too shallow to even appreciate the fact that I would have helped her if I'd had the money.

Jane: AND you would have charged her interest on it as well.

Daria: Aren't you supposed to be supporting me here?

Jane: Just trying to look at it from both sides amiga. (a loud pop is heard from somewhere inside the mall which sets Cheyenne off barking wildly)

Maria: (over her dog) What the hell was that?

Daria: I don't know, it sounded like...(a second pop is heard)

Jane: Yo what the hell is going on?

(A tall man wearing a camouflage jacket quickly comes out of the mall bank holding a bag and is attempting to tuck a gun into his jacket when a dye pack in the bag goes off and covers the man in red paint blinding him. He flails about with the gun still in hand, a shot goes off fortunately hitting only the wall. At almost the same instant, Everyone in the mall is seen ducking down to the floor. Cheyenne growls fiercely and takes off toward the man and lunges at him grabbing his throat in her Jaws and dragging him to the ground. The man screams and kicks but after a minute stops moving. The mall security guards soon rush in from all parts of the mall in response to what has occurred)

Jane: What the hell was that guys problem?

Maria: Do I look like a mind reader to you? Why don't you go up and ask him.

Jane: No way, you first.

(After a long while the man's body is placed in a body bag by the coroner and carted away, Cheyenne has since returned to Maria's side. The three of them approach the scene and even though they are stopped by police officers from coming any closer but from where they are they can see that the inside of the bank's lobby doors are stained in blood.)

Jane: (slowly) Oh my... god!

Daria: (sudden realization) Oh Shit, Quinn!! Where's Quinn, she said

she was going to the bank!! (begins fighting to break past the cop but he is assisted by other officers and they are returned to the food court until a detective comes to talk with them.)

(Two hours later)

(A detective comes walking up to Daria, Jane, and Maria)

Det. Morris: Which of you was looking for a Quinn Morgendorffer?

Daria: I am...where is she?

Det. Morris: May I ask your relation with her?

Daria: I'm her sister.

Det. Morris: I'll need to see some identification please. (Daria pulls out her drivers license and hands it to the detective. He looks it over and then hands it back)

Jane: All right man spill the beans, can't you see my friend is going nuts here.

Det. Morris: Ms. Morgendorffer could you walk over here for a moment? (Daria walks over and begins to talk with the detective. After a moment Jane see's Daria's Knees buckle and the detective has to catch her. Another moment passes and then He leads her back to the crime scene. Daria doesn't return for a full hour after that)

(Scene blurs and comes back into focus in the pizza shop in the present.)

Daria: (seriously begins to tear up) They asked me to identify her and when I did I had to run out of the room so I could loose my lunch.

Jane: Okay, I think story hour is over for now.

Daria: I'm okay Jane...really.

Jane: Yea, right. The Daria I know doesn't cry even when she ISN'T alright, which means your in some serious agony.

Daria: (Wipes her cheeks) (sternly) I'm all right Jane!

Maria: I'm sorry...I..

Daria: I said I'm all right, don't worry about it.

Jane: (winces) You want to get out of here Daria? We can head back to my house for a while, maybe you can talk to Trent for a while or something.

Daria: I guess I'm ready to leave, I'm not hungry anymore anyway. I think I'm going to go home though. I hope you don't mind.

Jane: Me, mind? (Sarcastically) Nah, I don't mind that my best friend wants to be alone the night before her only sisters funeral. The funeral IS tomorrow morning isn't it?

Daria: Yea, I can't wait to get it behind me either. The saying "hell is myself" has taken on a totally new meaning in the past few days.

Jane: Well, I'll be damned if I'm going to leave you alone tonight. So if you want we can stop by my place grab some formal clothes for tomorrow and I can crash over to keep you company, you know in case you wake up screaming in the night or something.

Daria: (thinks for several moments) Yea...yea, that would be good. Just don't be surprised if my mom flips once in a while.

Jane: I wouldn't expect otherwise from your family. (Attempts to cheer her up by imitating Quinn) Hey Daria, Which is my best side? I know they're both good. (Daria looks down at the floor at this) Ah hell, I'm sorry. I thought I could try to work a smile out of you.

Daria: It's okay Jane. Maria, you coming?

Maria: Sure, if I'm invited. Does your mom mind dogs?

Daria: She'll make an exception for yours, I'm sure of it.

(They all get up to leave)

Maria: Jane, what do you think happens when you die?

Jane: (Scowls) What the hell are you talking about?

Maria: I mean from...

Daria: A spiritual standpoint....like in religion or something?

Maria: Yea, I guess. I was just wondering if you actually end up somewhere like a lot of people say you do. You religious?

Daria: (thoughtfully) Not really, but I wonder sometimes... because of personal experiences. Why?

Maria: I don't know. Just curious I guess.

Jane: (nudging the two towards the door) Well now that we've got that off our chests, let's go. (They head out the door to their cars)

(cut to a different location....somewhere)

(The background is plain white, no furniture anywhere, no walls, no noise,nothing. Pulling back we can see Quinn...just staring, motionless)

Quinn: (blinking and squinting a little) What the....?? Where did everybody go..., Stacy are you hiding on me or something?

Voice: (from somewhere behind Quinn) Hello Quinn.

Quinn: (jumps and turns around) AHH!! (scene rotates as Quinn turns around to see who's talking to her. The person who spoke is a tall

man with long dark hair tied in a pony tail, wearing Khaki's and a same color shirt along with black boots and an ankle length black duster.) What are you a stalker or something to go sneaking up on somebody? If you wanted to ask me out that ISN'T the way to approach me you know.

Man: I'm sorry to sneak up on you, but to clear things up I wasn't looking to ask you out.

Quinn: Sure, sure...deny it if you want to. I know it's hard to ask out somebody who's as attractive and popular as I am, but that's no reason to be shy about it. Who knows, maybe you'll meet the right girl or something who WILL date a guy like you,...of coarse that won't be me. Sorry.

Man: Well, that's reassuring...I think.

Quinn: So...who are you, and where did everybody go? Is Stacy anywhere around here, she was just here a minute ago?

Man: Interesting questions...both of them. You can call me (1) Paul, and as far as where everybody else went....well, they didn't go anywhere. You did, and no Stacy isn't due here for about (looks at the date on his pager) ninety years, give or take.

Quinn: (looks at Paul weirdly) What are you TALKING about? I'm talking about my friend who was just behind me two minutes ago.

Paul:(frowns) I KNOW who your talking about, and it was two DAYS ago. (Pulls a palmtop computer out of his jacket pocket and begins to call up some data on it.) Anyway, I'm glad to see you've come out of it.

Quinn: Come out of what?

Paul: T.I.S, most people in your situation take a little longer.

Quinn: What?

Paul: Trauma Induced Shock, It's not all that uncommon. Basically it's the minds way of shielding itself until it can deal with what's happened.

Quinn: Um...whatever, listen this is all really interesting and stuff but your starting to freak me out a little bit so I'm going to go.

Paul:(raises an eyebrow) Really? Where are you going to go?

Quinn: Home of coarse, where else would I go.

Paul: Hmm...Where indeed. What's the last thing you remember?

Quinn; What are you a psychiatrist or something?

Paul: Just think already, your giving me a headache and in my line of work that's really saying something.

Quinn: (tries to think for a minute) The last thing I remember was going to the bank because my sister wouldn't lend me some money to get this really cute dress for homecoming. I mean, she CAN'T expect me to wear something I already have. People I know have SEEN me in stuff like that already. I mean, what would my friends say? I'll tell you what they'd say, they'd say...

Paul: (cuts her off abruptly) WELL, That's a start at least. Do you remember anything after that?

Quinn: (thinks for a minute) No, I can't remember anything after that. (Scared) Why can't I remember anything after that?

Paul: (assumes a stoic face) The mind can be rather selective about what it does and doesn't want to have immediately available in memory. Don't try to remember it...just close your eyes and let your mind wander, It will come to you.

Quinn: (looks at Paul uneasily) look this is all really interesting but...

Paul: (voice echoes loudly on the first word) JUST...do as I ask, please.

Quinn: Um...okay. Just...don't do that anymore. Okay?

Paul: (smirks) No problem.

(Quinn closes her eyes and her mind starts to wander, the scene blurs and fades in just outside the bank as Quinn and Stacy are walking to the lobby doors)

Stacy: You would look so Cute in that dress Quinn, I hope you have enough to get it. Sandi will be SO jealous, I can't wait to see her face.

Quinn: I know, and a sale like that doesn't come along every day you know. I just couldn't live with myself if I didn't get it. Why can't Daria see that?

Stacy: I don't know....she just doesn't have much interest in fashion. It's hard to imagine somebody who doesn't care about the way she looks. And she's related to you?

Quinn: Yea, but not closely. She's my cousin, she just lives with us for the time being. It's hard enough as it is having to go to the same school with her.

Stacy: I don't know Quinn, she doesn't seem that bad. Just not fashion coordinated, that's all. Maybe we can help her with her clothes, and change her hair or something.

Quinn: Oh, she's beyond help. Believe me. (Quinn opens the doors to the bank and the two of them walk in)

(Inside the bank everyone is seen lying face down on the floor. The only person seen standing is a man in a camouflage jacket, he is turned away from Quinn and Stacy facing the teller station while a woman works feverishly at filling a bag.)

Quinn: (stops in her tracks) What's everybody doing on the floor?

(The man is startled to hear that someone has spoken and violently turns around)

Man: (pointing a gun at Quinn) I said everyone on the floor!!

(From Quinn's point of view we see the man fire but Quinn hears no noise after the man's scream. She just see's the flash from the man's .44 and everything to her just seems to be occurring in slow motion from this point. Quinn just stares for a moment, a feeling of weakness has overcome her yet she still makes an effort to turn her head toward Stacy only to see her cowering and screaming in the corner on the floor by the door while seeming to have been sprayed with a red liquid. Quinn see's Stacy's mouth moving as she screams but still hears nothing. Quinn moves to face forward again but never see's the second shot coming. This one she heard, and felt. It sounded like a cannon going off in her ears as she felt what seemed like a freight train hitting her square in the chest. Quinn reeled back a little but not much, her knees buckled from under her and she crumpled to the ground face up. The last thing she saw was the man stepping over her as her world faded to black.)

(The scene blurs again and fades back to the present only to see Paul staring into her eyes)

Quinn: (shaking a little) What happened to me?

Paul: (Solemnly) You died Quinn.

Quinn: (Nervously) Um...That's not possible, I'm still here. See... (Waves her arms back and forth to prove it) If I were dead or something I would be nowhere...right? It was all a horrible dream.

Paul: (scratching his face) This is going to be a long assignment. Listen, have you ever had a dream in your life that seemed so real you actually felt pain? A dream where you didn't just see parts of it like a normal dream, you saw the whole thing, No parts left out. (Beat) No, of course you didn't. Because the mind doesn't work like that, dreams always have bits and pieces left out because it takes time for the imagination to come up with every little detail.

Quinn: (really getting scared) Listen, it's been really nice listening to you but I REALLY have to be getting home. Um...my parents will be getting worried by now. (Paul sits back and watches as Quinn attempts to find a way out) Where's the door to this place?

Paul: There would have to be walls in order to have a door Quinn. As you can see, this place has neither one.

Quinn: (screams) Where are we?!!

Paul: (smirks) Well, at least that question means we're getting somewhere. (Sighs) Okay, here's the deal. You are now in what we refer to as the waiting room, the scientific description would be a little difficult to explain in a short time. However, to give you a

feeling that your actually somewhere in the universe, this is a place somewhere between heaven and earth.

Quinn: What do you mean by somewhere, and how do YOU fit into all of this?

Paul: That's also complicated, I'll explain later. Anyway, this is where your brought until you've realized what's happened to you.

Quinn: Right, whatever. Isn't there supposed to be a judge somewhere like you see at those beauty pageants? I hope so because maybe THAT guy will show me how to get out of here.

Paul: You mean judgement, and that happened about two peco-seconds after you died.

Quinn: Stop saying that! Your scaring the hell out of me.

Paul: No, that would take a lot more effort. (sighs and pinches his sinuses) I can honestly say that this is the longest it's ever taken to get my point across. I can see that proof beyond what you've already seen is going to be necessary.

Quinn: What's THAT supposed to mean?

Paul: It means your going for a walk. (The scene changes in the blink of an eye and all of a sudden the both of them are standing in the middle of a highway at night in downtown Lawndale)

Quinn: What the...?

Paul: Nice change of scenery huh?

Quinn: This is the weirdest dream I've ever had, I wonder if I'll remember any of it when I wake up.

Paul: Yea? Well get ready because here comes your wake up call.

Quinn: What are you....(Turns around and Screams as a car doing about fifty passes right through the both of them and keeps on going)

Paul: (as Quinn is beginning to calm down) GOD, I love doing that to people.

Quinn: That...car...passed right through me! Oh my god, a car passed right through me!!!

Paul: (to himself) Houston we have comprehension. (Out loud) You don't have a body anymore Quinn, you died two days ago.

Quinn: (walks up to a road sign and passes her hand through it several times then starts to cry as realization sets in) But....I can't be!! Oh please god...My parents are going to KILL me!!

Paul: Now THAT would be an interesting trick all things considering.

Quinn: (begins to cry) Shut up! This isn't funny!

Paul: Do you see me laughing?

Quinn: What am I going to do? This is horrible, what are my friends going to say? My life is RUINED!

Paul: Well, unless you want another scare, I suggest we move out of the road because here comes a semi. (They move to the side as the truck goes by) Well, for the most part what we need to do has already been determined by you hasn't it. After a few formalities we can figure out what needs to be done, which brings up another question. Do you want to take care of this stuff as we walk around here or do you want to go back to the waiting room?

Quinn: I don't want to go back there, that place scares me.

Paul: No problem, as long as we're making headway. (Pulls the palmtop out of his Jacket pocket again) We have some things to discuss. (Begins calling up some data)

Quinn: What could we have to talk about?

Paul: (looks up at Quinn) You have some unfinished business to attend to.

(Cut to Jane's house)

Maria: (attempts to walk around in Jane's room but keeps stumbling on various objects around Jane's cluttered bedroom floor) Oh my god, this place is hazardous. Where is your bed Jane, or at least the closest chair? (Jane walks up to her and guides her to the bed) Ah, safety at last. If you don't mind I think I'll stay in one spot for the time being. Your room is just a little to cluttered for someone with visual limitations.

Jane: Hey, it's cool. Make yourself at home, speaking of visual limitations though, where is your dog?

Maria: How should I know? I let her off her leash when we came in the door, funny thing is I was foolish enough to think the floor would be reasonably clear of obstructions. What WAS I thinking?

Daria: Guess we better go find her then, Jane. We wouldn't want here to chew up your grand mothers old nightgown now would we?

Jane: Your just hoping you'll never have to borrow it again.

Maria: You guys are going to have to enlighten me on this little joke of yours at some point.

Jane: Oh don't worry, I'll be sure to fill you in on every little detail.

Daria: (glares at Jane) Traitor!

Jane: (Bows) Hey! I prefer the term treasonous artist thank you very much.

Maria: I'll go look for her.

Daria: No, I'll go. I need something to occupy my mind at the moment anyway. (Gets up and walks out of the room)

Maria: But...all I have to do is

Jane: Let her go look for Cheyenne, Maria. If it helps her to occupy her mind then let her go.(apologetically) What were you going to say anyway?

Maria: I was going to say, All I have to do is call her name and give a whistle.

Jane: Yea well, It's just as well. It's better that she's not in here because even in MY room there are things that remind her of Quinn. (Looks at Maria oddly for a moment) including YOU!

Maria: Huh? What are you talking about?

Jane: Take your glasses off for a minute.(Maria takes the glasses off) Yea, I was right.

Maria: What?

Jane: You have the same hair color and the same eye color as Daria's sister did. If we shrunk you about a foot and a half and stuffed you into a baby T-shirt, I swear to god you would be the spitting image of Quinn.

Maria: (realizing the impact this would have on Daria) Nobody's ever told me I look so much like her, Of coarse I didn't really know what Quinn looked like before now, but still.

Jane: Don't get me wrong, your not in any way identical. For one, you're a lot more top heavy then Quinn.

Maria: (blushes as she crosses her arms over her chest) Uh...thanks for noticing Jane.

Jane: (Laughs) Relax, I'm not like that. (Maria sighs in relief)

Maria: So, what's in this room that contains memories of the dearly departed?

Jane: Some paintings mostly, abstract art and stuff. Quinn's head in a guillotine is a rather prime example.

Maria: I can imagine how that would upset her. (Beat) (smirks) I wonder if she found my dog yet?

(Cut to Daria walking through the downstairs hallway)

Daria: Cheyenne? (VO) Where could that damned dog have gone to? With my luck she's deliberately hiding from me. (Hears a whimper) Well, at least she's giving me clues.

(Daria follows the sounds of the dogs whimpers down to the basement where she comes across Trent tuning his guitar. Every time he strikes a chord the dog whimpers)

Trent: What do you want dog? Why don't you go bug your owner or something? (Cheyenne places her head in Trent's lap and stares up at him)

Daria: (as she comes to the bottom of the stairs) Um..hey Trent, I didn't know you were home.

Trent: Yea, practice was canceled. Jesse and Max are both out with the flu or something. I guess it's kind of hard to practice without most of your band.

Daria: Yea, unless your planning to become a one hit one instrument wonder.

Trent: Mmm....I can't really see that happening. (Looks at Daria) Hey Daria, what's with this dog?

Daria: Oh, That's Maria's seeing eye dog. I guess she wandered off when she was let off her leash.

Trent: It's hard to tune my guitar if she keeps whining every time I play a chord. (Tightens a string a little more and plucks at it with the pick, this time Cheyenne picks up her head and instead of whimpering lets out a cheerful bark)

Daria: I guess she has a good ear for music, she can tell if the strings sound right.

Trent: Who would have thought, a music loving dog. (Gives the dog a pat on the head) (several moments pass before Trent turns to Daria with a solemn face) Listen Daria, I didn't get the chance to say anything earlier, I mean you haven't been over much with what's happened and all. Um...I just wanted to say that I'm sorry about what happened to your sister. There was no reason for it, I mean she didn't deserve it...I mean...(See's that he is upsetting Daria by making her remember everything that has happened) Aw dammit! I can't say anything right,let me just try to salvage this by saying I'm here if you want to talk or something.

Daria: (wipes the tears from her face but more appear faster than she can wipe them off) Thanks... Trent..... (Trent gets up and places his arms around her to extend any comfort he can, and moments later, the walls that Daria has spent years erecting just collapse under enormous emotional wight) It's Not fair!!! (pounds on Trent's chest with her fist once or twice) It's not fair, god dammit! Why did this have to happen Trent? Why couldn't I have done something, anything! I should have stopped her!

Trent: (Just lets her vent) There was nothing you could have done Daria, you can't blame yourself for this.

Daria:(buries her face in Trent's shoulder) I could have given her everything I had, but it wouldn't have been enough. It wouldn't have stopped her from going in there, But I could have. I SHOULD have stopped her. She may have hated me for it but she would still be alive DAMMIT!

Trent: You didn't know Daria. There was no way...

Daria: She's gone Trent, she was a tremendous pain in the ass but she was still my sister.

Trent: (holds her tightly) We'll help you through this Daria, Quinn wouldn't want you to dwell on her.

Daria: Yes she would Trent, she was the most vain, self absorbed person on the planet and I know she would have wanted me to remember all of the superficial things about her and I OWE it to her to remember her the way she would have wanted.

Trent: (Vo) Whoa, now that's something I never thought I would hear out of her. (Out loud) Daria, do you really think Quinn would have wanted you to remember her that way? She may have been self absorbed but there were times when she showed some rather endearing qualities.

Daria: (looks up into Trent's eyes as she wipes away some more tears)
) Like?

Trent: Um...uh..Well, there was...um...the time she borrowed your outfit for some party. She must have admired you deep down to want to borrow your outfit, Maybe in some respects she wanted to be more like you.

Daria: Trent, that was a fashion don'ts party. She borrowed my outfit because in her opinion it was the most unfashionable thing she could find.

Trent: (VO) Well this is going rather well. (Out loud) Oh...well there has to be something nice we can say about her that's legitimate.

Daria: I'll be impressed if you can come up with something.

Trent: Didn't you once say that she had an uncanny ability to coordinate her wardrobe with any situation at the drop of a hat?

Daria: (manages a weak smile at this) Yea, I can't say I know anybody else who can do that at a moments notice.

Trent: Well there you go. Where there's one good memory there must be more somewhere.

Daria: I guess. I'm probably just trying to think of them too hard or something. (Daria gets up to head back upstairs)

Trent: Leaving so soon, Daria? There's a whole lot more we could probably talk about, subjects like this one don't exactly get exhausted easily you know.

Daria: I know, Trent. But...um, I came down here to look for Maria's dog, she had wandered off.

Trent: Wandered off huh? I always thought these dogs were exceptionally well trained, you'd think she would know better than to stray far from her owner.

Daria: Yea well, I doubt she came down here just so I would follow

her. Jane or Maria could have easily come looking for her.

Trent: Yea, I guess. But it makes you wonder though. (Daria sits back down)

Daria: I guess.

Trent: As long as your down here, we can talk to your hearts content. (Meanwhile Cheyenne has long since headed back up the steps on her way to Jane's room)

(Cut to Jane's room)

Jane: (picks an all black dress out of the closet) I think this dress would best fit the occasion. It's long, black, fits my mood perfectly. Maria, what are you going to wear?

Maria: I never really liked dresses, I'll probably wear a pant suite or something. Nothing sophisticated.

(Cheyenne comes walking into the room and parks herself right in front of Maria's feet)

Maria: Good dog, she found you. (Cheyenne responds by placing a pay on Maria's knee)

Jane: She found her? Wait a minute, Cheyenne didn't just wander off did she. You WANTED Daria to go find your dog?

Maria: The person who would have the easiest time talking with Daria would be somebody she holds as a special friend, right. Somebody whom she would feel comfortable enough with to let her guard down, given some time together. Well, I just told Cheyenne to go find Trent and stick with him until Daria came to find her.

Jane: (smirks) Thus leading them to spend some quality healing time together. Maria, you've been playing matchmaker with them, haven't you.

Maria: No, I just knew she would want to talk to him.

Jane: Sure, But how did you know Daria would be the one to go after your dog?

Maria: I figured Daria would want to get away from everybody sooner or later, so I took advantage of that by giving her a legitimate reason to leave the room.

Jane: And find Trent.

Maria: (shrugs) Is that so bad? He's a friend.

Jane: No...but,

Maria: But, your jealous for some reason. Don't deny it either, I can hear it in your voice. Why?

Jane: It's just that, I've been trying to get them together for a couple of years now and here you come and manage to pull it off in three weeks. I have to admit, you are one sneaky...

Maria: Thank you Jane, I can do without the colorful commentary. I got your point, and I appreciate the compliment.

Jane: Glad I could help. One more thing though, how did you know where Trent was?

Maria: I didn't, I sent Cheyenne on a mission to find him remember. Or did you forget that quickly?

Jane: No, Just trying to see if there was any more to your plan than meets the eye.

Maria: No such luck Jane. (Strokes the fur on her dogs head)

(Cut to two hours later)

(It's about eleven o'clock and Daria, Jane, and Maria are seen pulling up to the curb in front of the Morgendorffer residence)

(As the three of them come in the door they are greeted by Helen who has been waiting up for them)

Helen: (rushes up to Daria and gives her a bear hug.) Oh my god Daria, why didn't you call? I've been going out of my mind all night long.

Jane: (to Maria) Now this is really weird, Normally her mother is absolutely nothing like this.

Maria: I've never met the woman personally, I've just heard Daria talk about her.

Jane: You'll have to meet her again on better days then.

Daria: For gods sake mom, I 'm fine, and your crushing me. (Helen lets go of Daria and Daria stumbles back a step or two into Maria knocking her dark glasses off.)

Maria: Damn! (She stoops down and begins to search the floor for them)

Helen: Daria, you should be more careful.

Daria: (frowns) Me?

Helen: I'm sorry young lady. (Crouches down, picks up Maria's glasses and hands them to her only to stop in her tracks as she comes face to face with Maria. Helen begins to tremble, she stands up and backs a few steps away) Oh my god! Quinn? (Throws her arms around Maria as she is attempting to stand up and gives her a stiff hug)

Maria: What the hell? Ms. Morgendorffer can you please let go of me! I' m not your daughter, My names Maria, I'm a friend of Daria's.

Helen: (Lets go and steps back to take another look)I...I... I'm sorry, I just don't know what came over me. It's just that...you look so much like her.

Maria: (To Daria) I thought your sister was a lot shorter than me?

Daria: She was, but you DO look a lot like her, generally speaking.

Jane: Uh...listen, I don't mean to be rude or anything but we're all kind of tired so we're going to head to sleep.

Helen: What? Um, sure I guess. But I'd like to talk to you later Daria, about what we talked about earlier.

Daria: (glares) I thought we were through with that subject.

Helen: No Daria, we didn't quite finish that....

Daria: (frowns) Fine we'll finish it later, I'm too tired to argue with you right now. (The three of them head up to Daria's room for the night)

(cut to Daria's room)

Jane: Jeez Daria, Your mom sure wasn't herself tonight.

Daria: Tell me about it, She's taking this a lot harder than I am. I think she may need counseling or something. With her luck they may end up sticking her on something stronger than Prozac.

Jane: Yeesh, that's strong stuff. Do you think she'll be able to hold together tomorrow?

Daria: (shakes her head) There's no way.

Jane: And how about you?

Daria: I'm okay..I think. I did a fair amount of venting earlier.

Jane: You don't say, I wonder where I was when this occurred.

Maria: Where indeed.

Jane: Shut up!

Daria: Did I miss something?

Maria: (shakes her head) Nothing important.

(Cut to Stacie's house that same evening)

(Ms. Rowe is seen talking on the phone to a psychiatrist)

Ms. Rowe: No, she won't come out of her room, She just stays in there. No, she has a bathroom connected to her room thank god. Yes, she will eat but not much. I bring the food up to her but she barely touches the plate at all. She's woke up screaming every night this week, nightmares about her friend most likely but she won't talk to me about them. Yes, I thought of having her talk to some friends but her only friends are this shallow little band of socialites at

school. I think her talking to them at this point would do a lot more harm than good. Her only real friend was the one who died. Are you serious? Yes, I know it would probably help her to let go but I can't get her to come out of her room, to say nothing about getting her to go to a funeral. (Sighs) I'll try my best, Thank you. (Hangs up) I swear, you waste good money on a doctor who tells you something you already know. (Heads to Stacie's room and pokes her head through the door) Stacie? (She looks around the room to see that Stacie is still sitting on the floor in front of her bed but now she is writing in a small notebook, Ms. Rowe recognizes it as her daughters diary) (sighs) At least she doesn't stay in the same spot anymore. Stacie, do you feel like eating anything? (Stacie doesn't answer) (Ms. Rowe looks down at the floor for a moment then looks at her daughter again) Listen, um..I was wondering if you felt up to going to Quinn's funeral tomorrow? It would probably be good for you, get things out in the open and all so we can work on them. (Stacie begins to cry again and at that moment her mother gets up to leave the room) I ...just don't know what else to do honey. (With that she turns and leaves the room)

(We see Stacy still writing in her diary as tear drops fall from her cheeks and land on the sheet of paper she is writing on)

(Stacie's mom walks down the hall without even seeing the two people standing next to the staircase)

Quinn: This is Stacie's house, what are we doing here?

Paul: This is the business you need to take care of, Quinn.

Quinn: Stacie's mom?

Paul: (rolls his eyes) Was Stacie's mom standing behind you in the bank? No, I don't think so. Use your head for god's sake Quinn, I know you have one.

Quinn: Okay, don't yell at me. So How can Stacy be my unfinished business?

Paul: Why don't you see for yourself. (Paul escorts her down the hall through the bedroom door and into Stacie's room where she is still writing in her diary)

Quinn: Stacy has a diary? Wow, I only thought brains kept stuff like that.

Paul: Appearances can be deceiving can't they. She was your friend Quinn, but she was also rather intelligent, and no where near as shallow as you were led to believe.

Quinn: Look at these books, "The tell tale Heart", "Of Mice and Men", You'd think Daria had been in here or something.

Paul: Or something.

Quinn: So what am I supposed to do here?

Paul: You tell me Quinn, what CAN you do? She hasn't left her room in days, barely eats, and won't talk to anybody.

Quinn: Why, What's her problem?

Paul: She saw you DIE, Quinn! Your blood got splattered all over her face, and frankly she can't deal with any of it.

Quinn: EWE, gross!

Paul: Yea, that about describes this whole mess.

Quinn: So like, I'm supposed to help her get past this?

Paul: (Pats Quinn on the head) I knew you had a mind somewhere. So the question I have for you is, how do you think you should go about this?

Quinn: How am I going to help her if she can't see or hear me?

Paul: She will if you want her to. (Quinn moves to say something to Stacy but is stopped by Paul) Not yet, for gods sake. You'll freak her out even more, Something like this requires planning so we need to do some more talking.

Quinn: She looks so alone, why aren't the rest of the fashion club members doing anything for her?

Paul: Did you really think they were her friends? They haven't come to see her once since your death. That girl Tiffany has your spot in the club now, it didn't take Sandi long to appoint her either.

Quinn: What, they made her vice president? How could they, Tiffany can barely tell lipstick from eyeshadow!

Paul: It gets worse, they Kicked Stacie out of the club for being antisocial. Now you tell me, since when is it a crime to grieve over someone's death?

Quinn: How could they DO something like that? Don't they have scruple's or something?

Paul: It must have sucked to be you Quinn, you were so shallow that you were replaceable by people just like you, FOR people just like you. All that time you thought you had all the friends in the world, and in reality you only had one. You see Quinn, (2) "the definition of a true friend is someone who knows you're an asshole, but for some reason likes you anyway". Stacy was that kind of friend to you Quinn. Kind of makes you think huh?

Quinn: Is that how Daria and her friend Jane are?

Paul: That's exactly how Daria and Jane are, true friends. It's such a rare thing to see these days.

Quinn: I can't believe it, all that time I mocked them for their friendship because they didn't want to conform to anything. And here I was all this time oblivious to something we actually had in common.

Paul: Ignorance isn't always bliss is it Quinn?

Quinn: I guess not. (Looks at Stacy) So what can I do to help her?

Paul: We'll discuss that shortly. (The scene changes to inside the Morgendorffer's house in the blink of an eye)

Quinn: What the? How do you DO that?

Paul: The speed of thought is pretty quick Quinn, makes travel a lot easier than driving a car.

Quinn: I guess it would have to. So what are we doing here? You said I had to take care of Stacy.

Paul: You do, but I figured you would want to at least see your sister again. Besides, it would be better to work your way up to that by making peace with your family first.

Quinn: Um...this isn't going to involve sucking up or anything is it?

Paul: Only if you REALLY want to stoop that low, Quinn.

Quinn: Okay, So how am I supposed to do this?

Paul: You'll figure it out when you get there.

Quinn: Get where? (Paul just rolls his eyes)

(Cut to the kitchen in the Morgendorffer household, the time is three in the morning)

(Daria is seen entering the kitchen to get glass of milk out of the refrigerator, Daria finishes her glass and turns around to put the glass into the dishwasher when suddenly she comes face to face with a tall figure and drops her glass causing it to shatter on the floor)

Daria: Gahh!! What the hell!!

Paul: Hi Daria, how have you been?

Daria: (squints in the dimly lit kitchen) Oh my god... it's YOU! What the hell are you...

Paul: (cuts her off) Yea, I seem to be getting that a lot lately.

Daria: (frowns) What are you doing in my house?

Paul: What a way to greet an old acquaintance, I wonder how you would have reacted if I'd just shown up at the door. I'm SURE Jake would recognize me...and then drop dead of a coronary.

Daria: Yea,...well last time I checked you had that effect on people.

Paul: (chuckles) What can I say, that's my job in life...and death for that matter.

Daria: So what are you doing here? (Beat) Wait...don't tell me you're here to...

Paul: No Daria, I'm not. I never break my word.

Daria: Um..okay, I guess I can say I'm relieved. Just tell me one thing...

Paul: No Daria, It wasn't me. I WAS on vacation when your sister bought it but the powers that be felt it necessary to call me back to give me a special assignment of sorts, at the moment One of the others is filling in for me. I think Simon was the one responsible for collecting your sister.

Daria: (glares) Can you stop finishing my sentences.

Paul: Sorry, just felt it necessary to make that little fact known before you went postal on me.

Daria: What makes you think....

Paul: I could see it building in you, it would have only been another minute or so.

Daria: (looks pissed) Will you stop doing that!

Paul: Okay, I'm sorry. It's become a bit of a habit after listening to stupid questions all day. You just get the urge to end the torture as soon as possible, certainly you can sympathize.

Daria: (looks at him for a moment)Yea..okay, I can. So your on some sort of special assignment? How did you get stuck with that?

Paul: Hmm...I'd have to say that the deciding factor on my temporary change of pace was right before my vacation. I went to pick up one of my appointments and managed to get there right before he got hit by a bus while crossing the street. The guy got sent flying down the road and when he landed I walked up to him and asked if he wouldn't mind doing the whole thing again because I forgot to put film in my camera.

Daria: I can see how that would be viewed as rather insensitive. But what does that have to do with you being in my house? Or with ME for that matter ?

Paul: An intriguing question Daria, but what I need to know is are you ready for the answer?

Daria: (glares) You had BETTER be going somewhere with this, I hate games. (Paul gestures for Daria to turn around) What? (Daria turns and comes face to face with none other than Quinn herself) (dumbfounded) Oh my...god! Paul what's going.... (Daria turns to talk to Paul but he is nowhere to be seen So Daria turns back to find that Quinn is still there. Daria just stares at Quinn for several minutes before gathering the courage to speak.) It....can't be. Glitter berries, that's what this is. This is all a huge nightmare caused by accidentally ingesting some glitter berries, Dad probably stuck them in the salad at dinner by accident. That's GOT to be it.

Quinn: You're not dreaming Daria, but if you were going to have a doozy of a nightmare later, I doubt it could top THIS. I know none of mine ever did.

Daria: Quinn! (begins to tear up as she lunges out to hug her sister but passes right through Quinn and falls to the floor)

Quinn: Sorry, um...I guess I should have warned you or something.

Daria: (Gets up and reaches out toward Quinn and watches as her arm passes through Quinn as if she weren't even there) How is this possible, I mean you LOOK solid. Shouldn't you be somewhere else or something?

Quinn: How should I know, why don't you ask your friend. By the way, where did you meet that guy? He's cute, in an odd straight forward sort of way. (Thinks for a moment) There is something else I have to know, Daria. What is with his outfit? Doesn't he know that long over coats have been out since that Columbine thing?

Daria: (monotone) Oh yea, your Quinn all right.

Quinn: What? Why are you looking a me like that?

Daria: Well, this isn't exactly the sort of conversation I'm used to having with you.

Quinn: What's different about it?

Daria: Your DEAD Quinn, that's what's different about it, I'm talking to the ghost of my sister. A conversation doesn't get any more screwed up than THAT you know.

Quinn: I'm not a GHOST, ghosts haunt houses and scare people while moaning a lot and stuff.

Daria: I don't know Quinn, you did a lot of moaning when you were alive. Of coarse it was more like pissing and moaning but it was a lot of unnecessary noise none the less.

Quinn: Look, I didn't come here to fight Daria. This is important.

Daria: I figured, but as long as the opportunity to get the last word in presented itself, I couldn't resist taking it.

Quinn: Just like your usual self, Daria. I have to admit your taking this whole thing pretty well.

Daria: (frowns) How do you mean?

Quinn: Well, I knew YOU wouldn't be broken up or anything. I mean it isn't like you to show much emotion toward anybody, especially me. But still, I thought you'd at least miss me or something.

Daria: I see, And the fact that I tried to give you a hug says nothing to you about how I feel?

Quinn: Is THAT what that was? I thought you were going to try to hit

me or something.

Daria: Oh yea, I would try to hit you for no damned reason.

Quinn: Don't be silly Daria, of course you had a reason. I was stupid enough to let myself get killed, remember. (Daria's lip begins to quiver as she struggles retain her composure.) Are you okay Daria? You look like you want to cry or something.

Daria: (fights it back) No...uh, I'm okay. I just had something in my eye, that's all.

Quinn: Okay, as long as your okay. Anyway, the reason I came here is because I thought you and I could talk or something. We kind of spent most of our lives avoiding each other, and when we DID have to spend time together we just insulted or bribed each other.

Daria: Funny, I don't recall ever bribing you. Blackmailing yes, but I never bribed you.

Quinn: Whatever, what I'm getting at Daria is I thought we could talk for a while. Reconcile our differences and stuff.

Daria: Quinn, I hate to admit it but that's one of the more intelligent things I've ever heard from you.

Quinn: Yea well, you can thank your friend for that. He made sure that idea was sunk pretty deep into my head.

Daria: He used a jackhammer? Damn, he's good. I've been wanting to do that to you for years.

Quinn: Ha ha, Daria. But seriously, we need to talk.

Daria: (Moves to the kitchen table and takes a chair)
(sympathetic)Yea Quinn, we do.

Quinn: So what's his story anyway? I mean, one minute I'm with Stacy and the next minute this guy is talking to me telling me that I died.

Daria: Who?

Quinn: Your friend.

Daria: Oh...Don't mind him, He's the angel of death. Or at least one of them as far as I can tell.

Quinn: (somber face) You're kidding right? This is another one of your sarcastic jokes? (Daria shakes her head no) WHOA, And he's cute too! I wonder if he's available.

Daria: (pinches her sinuses) Quinn, even in the afterlife you're hopeless. But I'm still glad you dropped by.

Quinn: Really? Daria have you been feeling okay?

Daria: No Dammit, I haven't been feeling okay. Quinn, do you have any idea what it's been like around here? Mom and dad are so stricken with grief they can barely function.

Quinn: And what about you?

Daria: I'm attempting to deal with it, but I'm not having a whole lot of success.

Quinn: And you're not ashamed to admit that? Daria, We've always hated each other.

Daria: As long as it's held in the strictest of confidence, no. And I never hated you Quinn, I just couldn't stand the way you acted like you were god's gift to humanity.

(The two continue to talk into the early hours of the morning)

(Fade to Stacy opening her eyes in the middle of the night to see Quinn looking at her from the far side of the room)

Stacy: Mmm....Hi Quinn. (Closes her eyes and rolls on her side. The she opens her eyes again in fright and bolts upright in her bed but doesn't see Quinn this time) Oh, god...the dreams are getting worse. (Starts crying and drops her face into her hands)

Quinn: (This time from the opposite side of Stacie's bed) We need to talk about what happened Stacy.

Stacy: (Turns her head to face Quinn and nearly leaps out of her bed to put some distance between them) Oh my god, oh my god...now I'm hallucinating. You can't be real, you died!

Quinn: Yea, everybody keeps reminding me of that. (Walks toward Stacy)

Stacy: (extends her arm and watches it pass through Quinn) How is this possible?

Quinn: It's kind of a long story. Anyway, we need to talk.

Stacy: (Breaks down again) Oh Quinn, I'm so sorry. I was so scared, All I could think to do was scream.

Quinn: It's okay Stacy, it wasn't your fault. Either way we have a lot to talk about, do you think you can handle it? (Stacy just looks at Quinn blankly) Right, that's what I figured. We have a long night ahead of us.

(Cut to the next morning around nine o'clock)

(Daria is seen asleep on the couch as Helen and Jake are coming down the stairs preparing for the funeral) (Helen Shakes Daria to wake her up)

Helen: (scowls) Daria, wake up. Your going to be late! Honestly how you can want to sleep in with all that this family has been going through.

Daria: Well, you're sure back to your old self. Where are Jane and Maria?

Helen: They've been up for hours, they're waiting for you in the kitchen. Now hurry up and get dressed already. (Helen heads into the kitchen)

Daria: All right mom, I just overslept that's all. (Remembers the events of the previous night) (VO) Was any of that real? Nah, it had to be a dream. (Gets up to head upstairs and notices an envelope that she was sleeping on sitting on the couch. It is addressed to Daria) What the hell?

Helen: (Calls from the kitchen) Hurry up Daria, you're going to have to rush as it is.

Daria: All right already. (She takes the envelope upstairs with her without reading it) How the hell did I get on the couch?

(After about fifteen minutes Daria comes down the stairs and joins her friends in the kitchen)

Jane: Morning Daria, Are you sure your ready for this?

Daria: Doesn't look like I had much of a choice. (Pours herself some tea)

Maria: Sounded like you were having some interesting dreams last night. Were you sleepwalking or something?

Daria: What do you mean?

Maria: I went to go looking for the bathroom last night and I heard you downstairs talking to somebody. Never heard any kind of reply, just you talking.

Jane: That doesn't sound like the Daria I know. Anything you want to talk about Daria?

Daria: (remembers what happened the previous night) No, nothing you would believe anyway.

Maria: (crosses her arms across her chest) Try us.

Daria: (thinks for a moment) Maybe later, right now I just want to survive the morning.

Jane: In that case, drink your tea. You don't look like you slept a whole lot last night.

(In the background Helen can be heard badgering Jake)

Helen: For gods sake Jake, can't you find anything on your own around here?

Jake: Get off my back Helen, Do you have any idea how much I've had on my mind lately?

Helen: How Dare you talk like you have more to worry about than I do.

Jane: Sounds like Helen is back to her old self again.

Daria: I wouldn't go that far, she's still venting her anger over this mess. My dad just happened to be the closest target this morning.

Maria: And how about you?

Daria: I'm dealing with it a lot better now.

Jane: Must have been one hell of a conversation you had with yourself last night. That is Unless Maria's hearing just suddenly got a lot worse and it was all part of her imagination.

Maria: Not likely, Jane.

Jane: In that case Daria, you'll have to fill us in. What was the dream about?

Daria: It wasn't a dream, at least I don't think it was.

Jane: Do tell? So what then?

Daria: Like I said, you wouldn't believe me.

Jane: Yea, well I still want to hear about it. So talk already.

Daria: I'll tell you later Jane, It's a long story.

Jane: (smirks evilly) Can't wait.

Helen: (calls from the living room) Daria are you ready yet?

Daria: (Yells from the kitchen) I've been ready for the past ten minutes.

Maria: I guess it's time to go then. (Gets up and pats her leg for her dog to come over. She then takes hold of the leash and they all reluctantly head for the door)

(Cut to the viewing)

(Daria is seen sitting in pews having already paid her respects along with Jane, Maria, and the rest of Daria's family. Others are seen paying their respects as they arrive. Helen and Jake as predicted are not holding up well)

Maria: It's not what I thought it would be like.

Daria: What?

Maria: I know what happens to the body after it dies, but it didn't feel like a person. It felt like she was a mannequin or something.

Jane: It's probably just the makeup they used on her. I wonder what Quinn would think of the job they did on her?

Daria: I'm sure she would find something to say about it, either they used too much or to little of this that and the other thing.

(Unnoticed by everyone in the room, Stacy meekly walks in and sits at the back of the room and watches everybody pay their respects to Quinn. Then after a short time the service begins, all the while Stacy sits quietly at the back of the room never saying a word. An occasional tear rolls down her cheek as she struggles to hold back her emotions.)

(after the service has concluded and people once again begin to console each other, Stacy manages to gather the courage to get up and walk to the front of the room to view Quinn in her casket. As she walks up to the front of the room she is finally noticed by Jane and Daria)

Jane: (after Stacy walks past) Oh my god, I can't believe it. She actually came out of her room.

Daria: Did you go to have another talk with her or something?

Jane: Not unless I've developed the ability to be in two places at once.

Daria: If you have then you'll have to show me that trick of yours. (Beat) You don't think her mom pushed her to do this do you?

Jane: I don't know, but it was probably the right thing to do if she did.

Maria: Maybe we should go talk with her, make sure she's going to be alright.

Daria: Yea, but lets wait until she's done.

Maria: Obviously, I'm not insensitive you know. (Daria just looks at her)

(As Stacy finishes and begins to return to the back of the room, her attention is caught by Daria, Jane, And Maria calling over to her in low tones.)

Stacy: Um... hey guys. It was a beautiful service, Daria.

Daria: Um..yea, thanks. So how are you holding up? The last we heard you were taking this pretty hard.

Stacy: Yea, I still am, but....Quinn was my friend and I owe it to her to be here.

Maria: It's good that you came, if anything Quinn wouldn't have it any other way.

Stacy: (thinks for a moment) Yea,.... I know. And as I think about it, and I think that helped me to make at least some peace with myself.

Maria: Really, how so?

Jane: (Nudges her) That's not important right now.

Stacy: That's okay, maybe I'll talk about it some other time. But for now, I think I should just keep working on accepting the fact that Quinn's gone.

Daria: (sighs) Your not the only one.

Stacy: Jane, isn't your brother coming to the funeral?

Jane: Yea, he'll be along. He's going to meet us at the cemetery, something about not having suitable clothes for the viewing. Go figure.

Daria: Trent was worried about his clothes?

Jane: He only worries about that for special occasions, showing up in tattered jeans just wouldn't be appropriate for something like this. Even he knew THAT.

Daria: I guess.

Stacy: Jane, I just want to thank you for stopping by my house yesterday. I heard you, I just couldn't bring myself to answer.

Maria: Because you didn't want to do anything that would acknowledge the fact that Quinn died.

Stacy: Yea, That about says it.

Jane: (places a hand on Stacie's shoulder) We'll be here if you need to talk.

Stacy: Thanks, I'm going to need you guys.

Daria: No problem.

Maria: Ditto.

(Slow fade to the cemetery)

(Everyone is gathered around the casket as the service is concluded, Trent is present but stands behind everyone else and just listens as he pays his respects. As everyone begins to disburse, Trent walks up closer to join his sister. The Morgendorffers, The Lanes, and Maria accompanied by her dog stay behind to watch the casket lowered into the ground.)

Helen: (Places her head against Jake's shoulder as she begins to cry) Oh God Jake, Our baby is gone. She's really gone.

Jake: She'll never be gone Helen. (Points to his head) Not as long as she's still up here. (He holds her close as she begins to un bottle her emotions into his shoulder)

Daria: (whispers to Jane) I think that's the most intelligent and coherent thing he's ever said to her.

Jane; You have to admit though, it was the right thing to say.

Daria: Yea,...it was. Maybe there's hope for them yet.

Maria: They say time heals all wounds Daria, neither you, nor your parents are any exception to that rule.

Trent: I hope that's true, because it looks like they're going to need a lot of it. Time that is.

Jane: Trent! So you did make it after all.

Trent: I know what all this means to Daria, and to you Jane. I couldn't oversleep for something like that.

Jane: You got up just for us Trent? That's so sweet.

Trent: Yea, well. It guess it was just something I had to do. Out of respect for Daria and all.

Daria: Thanks Trent, It means a lot to me.

Trent: It's cool.

(The four continue to talk as Jake and Helen continue to console each other. The scene pulls way back toward the cars to reveal Both Paul and Quinn watching the proceedings)

Quinn: I always wondered what this would be like. Watching my own funeral, and stuff.

Paul: Just about everybody who has ever existed has thought about that. Some people have delusions of grandeur on the subject.

Quinn: It's so weird though, I never really liked the idea of being buried.

Paul: It's either that or be cremated. Do you really want to watch yourself burned.

Quinn: Eww....that's just gross.

Paul: Then don't whine about it so much.

Quinn: Um...I don't know if this is a stupid question or not, but what happens now?

Paul: That's not a stupid Question Quinn. I have to admit, you did a pretty good job all things considering. You didn't scare Stacy nearly as much as I thought you would.

Quinn: What can I say, I'm a people person.

Paul: Yea, well.... (Paul is interrupted by the voice of someone behind them)

Voice: Hey Paul, I thought you would still be here.

Paul: (turns around to face the person) Hey Nick, where else would I be.

Nick: After the bus thing I honestly didn't know for certain.

Paul: What you've never had a bad day before?

Nick: Hey, we've all had our dog days. Yours just happened to take the cake though. However last time I checked, things are cool for you now so you should be able to get back to work as soon as your done here.

Paul: That's good, I have to admit though. This wasn't such a bad assignment.

Quinn: Excuse me, but who is THIS guy?

Paul: (looks somewhat irritated) But then again....

Nick: How's it going Quinn, I'm Nick.

Quinn: Is he an angel of death too?

Paul: No, I'm death. He's fate.

Nick: (Shakes Quinn's hand) How's it going.

Quinn: So what do YOU do?

Nick: Lets just say I get the ball rolling in life. I'm responsible for things that HAVE to happen in the world.

Quinn: So where do I fit into all of this?

Paul: We're not sure yet, you'll get some sort of job though.

Quinn: Um...okay. Could I work with cute little animals or something? That's the kind of thing I'm really good at. (Nick and Paul just look at each other and shake their heads)

Paul: So what brings you by here?

Nick: Oh, you know me.

Paul: Yea, A little to well I'm afraid. What's up?

Nick: Nothing's up, just business as usual.

Quinn: What are you guys talking about?

Paul and Nick: Shop.

Quinn: Alright! What stores are we going to first. (Nick and Paul just look at each other in pity)

(The last of the mourners are coming towards them on the way to their cars)

Nick: Hold on for just a second Paul.

Paul: I knew you were here for something, who's the target?

(Nick doesn't answer, but he walks directly into the path of Maria's

dog and as soon as Both Maria and her dog are close enough Nick Jumps forward and screams at the dog. Maria's dog is startled and barks wildly as she jumps back knocking Maria backward into Trent's arms. Nick just calmly walks back to where Quinn and Paul are standing and the dog quickly calms down.)

Nick: Well, my job is done.

Quinn: What the hell was THAT about?

Nick: Just sit back and watch the magic. (The three watch as Trent helps Maria up)

Trent: Whoa, are you okay?

Maria: Yea, I'm okay. I don't know what got into Cheyenne, she never barks for no reason. (Turns to face Trent and begins to run her hand over Trent's face examining it's features)

Trent: What are you doing?

Maria: Just taking a look at who I have to thank for catching me. You have some nice facial features.

Trent: (smirks) Um...thanks, I guess. So...um, are you into music or anything.

Maria: A little bit, as long as the band believes in the music they're writing and doesn't sell out.

Trent: No sell outs here.

Maria: I take it you're a musician?

Trent: Yea, The bands name is Mystic Spiral, but we might change our name.

Maria: Sounds like a doors cover band. Sounds like something that just might be worth hearing.

Trent: You can stop over some time and listen to us practice.

Maria: (smiles) I just might do that. (They continue to walk to the cars)

Jane: (Turns to Daria) What the hell did I just miss?

Daria: I have no idea, but it looks like it might snowball into something.

Jane: You don't CARE? Daria, Trent is flirting with your friend for gods sake. Aren't you just a little mad or something?

Daria: Yea, a little bit. But you know as well as I do that Trent never really looked at me as more than a friend. Maybe it's for the best.

Jane: But all that effort I put into getting you two together, I mean...

Daria: (Glares) You mean sabotage.

Jane: (shrugs) Guilty as charged. But it still pisses me off dammit.

Daria: I got over him before, I guess I can do it again. It just isn't meant to be.

Jane: Is this going to affect your friendship with him.

Daria: God, I hope not. (Daria and Jane walk past Nick, Paul, and Quinn on their way to the cars)

Paul: (looking at his palmtop as it beeps signaling changes in progress) I REALLY hate it when you create more work for me, Nick.

Nick: (Takes a bow) Happy to be of service.

Quinn: What did he do to them?

Paul: He started something between them.

Quinn: But didn't my sister Like that guy or something? I mean, he even gave her some kind of rash.

Nick: It was just a crush, nothing more. They were never meant for each other, Quinn.

Quinn: That's so sad, why not?

Nick: Don't get worked up over it, there is somebody out there for your sister.

Paul: Yea, if you don't change anything else around here. Just make sure Daria get together with somebody decent.

Quinn Wait, isn't there somebody else who does that lovey dovey stuff?

Nick: Yea, but he only does people who wouldn't have a clue if it punched them in the groin.

Paul: (Looks at his palmtop and whistles) Fertile girl, your sister.

Quinn:EWWW, don't tell me that stuff.

Paul: I don't mean like THAT, Quinn. She has two sets of twins somewhere down the road.

Quinn: Really? Will I get to watch out for them and stuff?

Nick: Maybe, but that's not really up to us.

Quinn: So...what happens now?

Paul: Now you move on Quinn. You've done a good job here. Ready?

Quinn: Um...I guess so. Will I get to come back once in a while?

Paul: I don't see that as a problem, just watch yourself around your family.

Quinn: Um..okay, I guess I'm ready. Beam me up, ...or whatever you guys do.

(The scene slowly fades to pure white)

(Roll ending credits)

("Knocking on heaven's door" By Guns and Roses plays in the background

Special thanks to Naomi for her help when I got stuck.

Foot

notes*****

1) Paul is a character first introduced In one of my previous fan fictions titled "A New Experience" Daria's familiarity with Paul is explained with that story.

2) This is a quote I obtained from my friend Zed.

3. Issues

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV

>
 Issues

> By
 Steve Mitchell

>

>Prologue: This story is the third in the "Unseen Phenomena"series.

It takes place approximately one and a half years after the story "All Good Things". To understand where this story line comes from it would be beneficial to read the stories that precede this one in order.
1. A New Experience

>2. All Good Things
.

>.
.

>#. Season's End

>
 (It is nighttime and all are asleep within the Morgendorffer household. Daria lies sleeping within the confines of her own padded room rolled up in her blanket as if she had been tossing and turning throughout the night. Within Daria's mind the scene has suddenly changed from the nightmare she had been having about having to identify Quinn in the mall. The scene now is very different from what it had been. As Daria looks around she notices that she is standing in the center of a paved road. The entire area is dimly lit as a result of the lamp inside a nearby phone booth and a clear midnight sky allowing a full moon to cast its ghostly glow upon everything underneath it. Daria looks about her in an attempt to discover her location and possibly the method by which she got here but all she can see are the shadows cast by short trees lining either side of the road. Not your typical trees either, but the ones you typically see growing among the sand dunes at the shore to keep the sand from

shifting.

> It is quiet here, there is little sound with the exception of maybe some crickets somewhere in the bushes, obviously a lost cause to attempt to silence. Daria takes several steps down the road hoping to come across something that would give her a clue as to her location when suddenly she becomes the focal point of a very intense beam of light. She freezes in her tracks and shuts her eyes until the beam of light moves off of her and as she opens them again she can see the beam of light tracking far out in front of her still moving away. In the distance a long and low pitched foghorn is heard and as Daria looks up at the horizon just above the trees, she spies the source of what had at first seemed like a close encounter of the third kind. It was a light house standing tall along the coastline. This was an obvious clue as to her general location, "Where the hell am I" she thought. As she said this A warm summer breeze picked up, blowing through the trees and as the moving air passed around her it caught a few loose strands of Daria's hair and suspended them out away from her. The breeze felt very soothing and served to calm her. Daria closed her eyes for the moment and figured she might as well enjoy the moment before something goes sour and turns the whole experience into another haunting nightmare. The next thing Daria knew she was lying in her bed that morning having just woken up from her sleep.

 Daria came down the stairs sometime around noon that Saturday dressed in a summer attire that is unlike her typical garb. For once Daria is actually wearing a light colored T-shirt and a pair of black jean shorts. Her hair is still damp from her morning shower, she figured the summer heat would do a pretty fair job at drying it for her so why waste the electricity on a hair dryer. She walked into the kitchen right past her parents who were sitting at the kitchen table. Helen is drinking her coffee as usual and Jake was reading his paper in silence.)

>
Daria: (Sticks a couple pieces of bread into the toaster and turns to her parents expecting to hear some sort of either bickering between them or a lecture from Helen about calling in if she's going to be late or if their's absolutely anything out of the ordinary. But not a peep was heard from either of them. Daria after several minutes decides to break the apparent war of silence, something she thought that she would certainly regret.) Um....hey, is something going on this morning? I mean, mom...your home, ... and your not even on the phone. (Scowls) What's wrong?

>
Helen; (looks up from her coffee) Huh....OH, nothing's wrong sweetie. I just couldn't drag myself out of bed this morning so I figured that it was probably time for me to take a day off and sort of relax. There's no point in working myself to where I would have heart attack like your father.

>
Jake: (looks up from his paper briefly) HEY! I didn't do it on purpose you know.

>
Daria: (Takes a step backward) Are you feeling alright, mom? You taking a day off from work is like death asking me if I want a job. (VO) Ugh, I should be careful what I ask for.

>
Helen: Oh Daria, why do you always have to be so negative.

>
Jake: (looks up from his paper....again) A job in death? DAMMIT, Daria if you even think that I'm going to let my daughter take a job as a professional hit man, then your more out of your mind than I am. Um..I mean,wait give me a minute.

>
Helen: (pinches her sinuses) Oh for gods sake Jake, just read your paper and let me handle this.

>
Jake: But Helen, I was actually going to make a point.

>
Helen: I'm sure you were, now go back to reading your paper and let me handle this.
>
Jake: I ALWAYS have to go back to the paper don't I. (Mumbles a few more things and flips the page of his paper)
>
Helen: (turns back to Daria with a resentful look) Daria, I just needed to take a break for one day, I CAN do that can't I?

>
Daria: Yea, of course you can. It's just unusual for you to think of anything in the morning but an important case. And your phone isn't even ringing at all.
>
Helen: (sounding very irritated) For god's sake Daria, I turned the damned thing off. Checking my voice mail later is probably going to be hell but it's worth it not to have shove the thing in my ear every five minutes.
>
Daria: (Daria's toast pops up out of the toaster and Daria takes this as her cue to make a quick exit before either of her parents comes to their senses) (VO) Okay Morgendorffer, exit stage right and live to fight another day. (out loud) Right then, Um...I guess I'm going to go over Jane's and see what she's up too. (Daria grabs the toast and quickly walks out of the kitchen and out of the front door and gets in her car, backs out of the driveway and heads for Jane's)

>
(Upon hearing Daria's car pull away, both Jake and Helen quickly get up and go to look out the front window)
>
Jake: Do you think she bought it?
>
Helen: Maybe, but I actually thought she was going to stick around to try and see what we're up too.
>
Jake: Dammit,we should have faked one of our arguments. I bet that would have been convincing.
>
Helen: Well whatever....she'll be gone for the day. (She turns to Jake and smiles as she gives Jake a wink. Jake gets the idea and goes into the kitchen to get a bottle of wine from the cabinet. While he's in the kitchen Helen calls over to him) Oh Jakey, why don't you take a run up to the bedroom first and grab some of that massage oil we picked up the other day.
>
Jake: Oh YEA...now we're talking. (Jake briskly walks out of the kitchen and heads up the stairs)
>
(Cut to Jane's house)
>
(Daria stood on the front steps of Jane's house ringing the doorbell and half expecting her friend to answer the door, but to her surprise Amanda answered the door. The fact that she was even home at all was enough to warrant amazement.)
>
Amanda: (smiles cheerfully as if she were going to start with that butterfly rant Jane had told her about so many times.) Oh....Hello.
>
Daria: Um hi,.....is Jane home?
>
Amanda: Oh....no, she left this morning with Trent. He was going on a trip with his band I think.
>
Daria: She left already? She didn't even say goodbye, hell she didn't even say when she was leaving.
>
Amanda: Maybe she forgot, but if you want. When I see her I'll tell her you said...HI.
>
Daria: Um....right, you do that.
>
Amanda: Bye.
>
Daria: Mmmph, ...bye. (Daria walked back to her car and reluctantly opened the door and climbed in, and sat there for a moment before driving off. About ten minutes later Daria sat in the driver's seat of her escort as she drove slowly down Newbold's corner road, at the same time that she was looking for a friend's house she was also thinking of the multitude of events that had transpired in

the past year and a half. Quinn's death was the largest event on her mind at the moment but for the most part Daria had allowed herself to accept what had happened in order to move on with her life. Now there was this, it wasn't the largest of deals but Jane leaving for a road trip without even saying goodbye or saying when she'd be back was certainly something that caused her some worry. And the fact that she didn't even ask her to come along, Jane always does that. No matter though, At least wherever they were on the road Daria knew that they would be alright as long as Jane could keep Trent from nodding off at the wheel.

> Daria looked at the names on the passing mailboxes as she drove slowly down the street, finally she came upon a grey mailbox with raised white letters spelling out the name Macleod. Daria stopped her car in front of the mailbox and looked the house over. Maria had told her the address to her house once which is how she had been able to find her way here, but she had never been able to tell her what the house looked like due to the fact that Maria had never seen it herself. Daria sighed and pulled the car up to the curb in front of the house and shut her car off. She looked over at the driveway, somebody was obviously home as there was a single pickup Truck with firefighter tags and a blue light-bar on the roof parked in the driveway.

>Daria: Well, At least somebody's home. Watch this end up like one of those screwed up cartoons where they greet unexpected guests at the door with a shotgun shoved against the edge of their noses.

> (Daria exited the vehicle and walked up the driveway to the front door and rang the bell. Daria waited about three minutes and another ring of the doorbell before sighing and turning to walk back to her car. As Daria is starting to walk away the slight metallic screech of a deadbolt is heard and the door opens to show Maria standing there while wearing her typical blue jeans and purple turtleneck shirt, expecting someone to be directly in front of her)

>Maria: Hello? (waits for a few seconds) Is anybody there?

>Daria: (Turns in surprise that someone answered the door after so long) Oh....hey Maria.

>Maria: Daria? This is a surprise, ...what brings you by?

>Daria: Um...Jane mentioned something about leaving for a road trip but for some reason failed to tell me when she was leaving and now she's gone. By chance do you know when she left?

>Maria: (Frowns) Not really,but then again I haven't heard a whole lot from either of you since graduation. I saw Jane once in a great while when I stopped by to see Trent but that's about it. I was wondering if everybody had forgotten about me. You two are about the only friends I've got, It gets kind of lonely around here you know.

>Daria: (looks down at the ground for a moment) Yea...I'm sorry about that. I've had a lot on my mind lately, and Jane leaving for a road trip without saying goodbye isn't helping. That's no excuse, though. And... I understand if your mad at me.

>Maria: (smirks) Come on in, your libel to get either a sunburn or be eaten alive by mosquito's if you stand out on the front steps all day. (Thinks for a moment) At least I THINK it's sunny out, for all I know it could be dark out. (Maria takes a few steps backward to allow Daria enough room to move past her and then closes the door after she hears Daria's footsteps go past) Well, whatever the reason for your visit. I'm still glad you came by, I don't get very many visitors outside of the occasional relative from over seas and maybe a mobility instructor at the beginning of the year back in highschool.

>Daria: What about Trent?

>Maria: Are you kidding? It's the highlight of my day when he shows up, but he tends to sleep late so when I do get to see him it's not for as long as I'd like it to be.

>Daria: Okaaay....I take it your not slighted by our accidental lack of communication then?

>Maria: (Smiles as she extends her left arm to the wall in search of a reference point and begins to make her way towards Daria's voice) It takes more than you and Jane to slight me, Daria. I've dealt with taunts on my blindness, accent, and height all through grade school and middle school. I can pretty much roll with the punches so to speak.

>Daria: I know you've never really told me a whole about yourself so perhaps you could explain that last part because you're losing me on the accent part here. You sure sound like a typical American to me.

>Maria: (Smiles again and begins to speak with a mild Scottish accent) I was born In Falkirk Scotland and moved over to the US when I was five, one of the first things the other kids would tease me about in grade school was my accent so I worked as hard as I could to hide it. (Pauses for a moment and then resumes an American accent) You mean you've never heard me slip?

>Daria: (scowls) You tried to hide your speech because kids made fun of you? What the hell is that about, I've been dealing with that sort of crap all of my life.

>Maria: No, I tried to hide my accent because it was ONE of the things I was made fun of for, it was ALSO the only one I could control. Hey, you try making it through first grade with kids saying "Hey look, Nessie's here"

>Daria: Well I can't exactly say I survived assaults of THAT manner, but Aside from being an outcast for being a brain and having my sanity attacked constantly...I'm sure my personal traumas could compete with that one. I just fought back with extreme sarcasm, and it seems to have done a pretty good job so far at keeping the vipers at bay.

>Maria: Maybe, but venomous amounts of sarcasm have never been my forte'

>Daria: (Walks over to a nearby recliner and has a seat) That's too bad, With you, Jane, and myself together we just might have been able to generate enough venomous sarcasm to take over the world. (Beat) But as I mentioned before, since you've never really told me much about yourself. You might as well continue with your stories of persecution.

>Maria: Sorry, I didn't mean to gripe.

>Daria: Hey everybody's got to have a hobby, but seriously...At the moment we haven't found anything else to occupy our time. So let's hear it.

>Maria: (finds her way to the couch across from Daria) To be brief, kids used to move things around on me such as my chair as I was about to sit in it to make just one example. Shenanigans like that continued off and on until about sixth grade. THAT year was a damned nightmare of awkwardness, that's when my body decided that it liked life in the vertical.

>Daria: Ah yes, I've been wondering how you wound up so tall. I was beginning to suspect that your parents had once placed you on the rack, But I guess that theory doesn't hold as much water as it once did. Personally, I didn't have many of my own but I guess I can relate to the awkwardness, my whole life being a prime example.

>Maria: Yea, but these were growth spurts from hell. In one school year I went from being four foot ten to five foot four. I was happy if I went through a day without tripping over myself.

>Daria: Take it this way, at least you didn't leave holes in the ceiling when you stood up.

>Maria: Ha, ha, I'm just rolling on the floor on that one.

>Daria: Relax , it was just a simple joke. So you spent the school year tripping over your own two feet,...and anything else that was in the way.

>Maria: Yea well, there's that and since it didn't take to long for kids to notice that I was soon taller than most of the teachers they stopped calling me Nessie and started asking me for weather reports.

>Daria: Sounds like you had a ball growing up.

>Maria: Oh yea, I was wearing one HUGE happy hat. At least I finally stopped growing up in sophomore year.

>Daria: Oh come on, being tall isn't all that bad. Look at basketball players.

>Maria: I don't know a single basketball player who was six foot four at age fifteen. BUT... it wasn't over then. Nope, god decided that I wasn't proportioned adequately enough in the chest area. The result being these magnets for male hands.

>Daria: You make it sound ten times worse than it is, you have an attractive figure.

>Maria: (blushes slightly) Yea, yea...That's enough about me, flattery will get you nowhere and everywhere at the same time.

>Daria: I take it your done ranting?

>Maria: Hey, you wanted to hear it. It's your own damned fault for listening. (Leans forward in her seat) SO... anything else new? What did you want to do today?

>Daria: I'm not sure, I'd settle for almost anything at this point.

>Maria: Sick Sad World isn't on today?

>Daria: (mumbles) It was pre-empted for the Democratic National convention.

>Maria: Those Bastards! I'll have Cheyenne chew their limbs off immediately!! (Whistles for Cheyenne who comes into the room from the kitchen) Cheyenne...go kill a democrat!! (The dog just stares at Maria as if she's on crack and then heads back into the kitchen)

>Daria: (Smiles) I suppose it would help if she knew what a democrat WAS.

>Maria: I guess that's something I'll have to teach her should I ever take an interest in politics. (Sighs) So SSW has been pre-empted, and Jane disappeared on a mystery road trip. Is it me or does that sound like something MTV would be directly responsible for?

>Daria: Probably, but at the moment I'm all out of tactical nuclear weapons small enough to send through the mail in show of my appreciation.

>Maria: (throws her arms up) It's always something isn't it. (Shakes her head) I hope I wasn't your LAST resort for something to do.

>Daria: No, that would have been hanging out with my parents. Now THAT would have been a scary sight.

>Maria: Gah, there's hope Daria. You still have time to turn back... (chuckles) Well we've established that your arrival at my door wasn't just to kill time. So what do you want to do then?

>Daria: I don't know but I know I'm not in the mood for pizza that's

for sure.

>Maria: Blasphemy! There's always room for food in the day.

>Daria: For YOU there is, you're the one who can eat anything and not gain an ounce. I think if I ate as much as you do I'd be wearing spandex right now.

>Maria: Okay, judging by your tone of voice I'm guessing that looks bad right?

>Daria: I'm no fashion fiend but I know a damned ugly sight when I see one, I think it would rank right up there with that woman a few streets over who wears a mumu.

>Maria: Okay, so the pizza king is out. What to do, what to do...

>Daria: (Sighs) Well, the summers half over and I haven't been to the shore yet. There IS something that I wouldn't mind checking out down there. Do you want to take a run down to the board walk?

>Maria: The boardwalk, That's a bit of a drive isn't it?

>Daria: About an hour and a half, it'll kill some time to say the least. Maybe we can trick a hitchhiker into thinking we're going to pick him up and then run over his luggage, I mean as long as we're on our way in that direction anyway. We might as well make it interesting.

>Maria: Daria, remind me never to be in the area when you're behind the wheel. Do you think we'll be able to do any swimming while we're down at the shore?

>Daria: I doubt it, the surf is probably still to rough from that noreaster we had last weekend.

>Maria: Damn weather. If I know your luck the way you've described it, if you went in the water you'd get pulled away from shore by a rip tide only to find out this Ruttheimerupchuck person from school, or whatever his name is, would be the lifeguard on that particular beach area.

>
Daria: (Shivers) I think at that point, I'd consider drowning a blessing in disguise.

>
Maria: Well, I guess we COULD take a walk on the board walk to keep ourselves occupied being as you may have lost any palate for the surf, rough OR calm.. You're not going to want to hold hands or something are you?

>
Daria: Um...I think I can go with a no on that one. And I don't suppose you have any BETTER ideas than going to the shore?

>
Maria: (Shakes her head reluctantly) Nope, not a one. (Sighs) All right then, let me get changed into something a little cooler and I'll be right with you.

>
(Maria gets up from her seat and makes her way to the stairs and begins to make her way up to her room. Daria in the meantime trying to keep busy begins to look through a couple of magazines that are sitting on the coffee table that is positioned near the recliner. A few of them are regular magazines complete with text articles and pictures. Some of the others are in braille and have raised pictures)

>
Daria: They make braille magazines? (Daria flips through one of them trying to make sense of the multitude of raised dots that make up the braille text) How the hell can she read all of this? (Daria puts down that magazine and picks up another braille magazine, this one was partially buried under all of the others. Daria opens the cover and notices that THIS one has a lot more of the raised pictures than any of the others. Daria holds the magazine at different angles

attempting to make sense of them since they are harder to distinguish as they are the same color as the rest of the manilla paper they are on.) Is this what I think it is....? (Daria flips through a few more pages and then puts the magazine back and patiently waits for Maria to come back)

>
(After about twenty minutes Maria makes her way back down the stairs into the living room. She has changed into a white T-shirt and a pair of jean shorts and now has her tied back with a scrunchie)

>
Maria: Okay, I'm ready...did you want to change or anything?

>
Daria: No I'm okay, Lucky for me I decided to wear shorts myself. There's usually a breeze down at the shore and I'm afraid my skirt would get lift.

>
Maria: Hey, think of it as a spoiler for the guys.

>
Daria: No thanks, having guys whistle at the sight of my butt isn't exactly one of my more pronounced goals in life. (Beat) Um... anyway,...I was looking through some of the stuff on the coffee table, I didn't know they made magazines in braille.

>
Maria: Yea, they're hard to get but if you know who to get a hold of down at the commission for the blind then it's usually possible if you wait long enough.

>
Daria: (Smirks and picks up the last magazine she was looking at and hands it to Maria) Even THIS one? (Maria grabs hold of it and begins to browse through it with her fingertips, then after a moment blushes heavily)

>
Maria: Um.....no, the commission doesn't supply these. I'm sorry, I should have hid that better.

>
Daria: It's cool,... I guess. There's nothing wrong with curiosity as long as your not slobbering over the pictures.

>
Maria: Don't worry about me...I'm not the slobbering type.

>
Daria: Good thing too, Your dog might think she had competition.

>
Maria: Can't have that now can we.

>
Daria: Not unless you really WANT to be in direct competition with your canine companion . (Beat) All right then, I guess we should get going.

>
Maria: Sounds about right. (Pauses for a moment) Um....speaking of canine companions, do you mind if I bring my dog? I really hate using a cane.

>
Daria: (frowns) My elbow isn't a good enough guidance system for you? Perhaps we should resort to some experimental form of echo location. You could go around screaming all day long and listening for the rebounding sound waves to determine where things are with respect to yourself.

>
Maria: Your elbow is fine Daria, but do you really want to have to drag me around for the whole day? You may want to go browse in a store or go use the bathroom in private or something. Or do you really want me holding onto your elbow for guidance while you try to do such things?

>
Daria: (Thinks for a moment) I suppose you have a point, (sighs) Do you have a blanket for her to sit on? My back seat isn't worth saving, I know. But I can imagine anyone who sits there in the future not wanting dog fur on their butts.

>
Maria: Understandable....I'll get a beach blanket to cover the seat with. (Maria turns and makes her way to the hall closet and finds a large blanket and then turns to where she thinks Daria is and holds it up) Is this big enough?

>
Daria: I'm over here, Maria. (Maria turns in the direction of Daria's voice) Yea, that'll work.

>
(Maria gives a whistle and Cheyenne comes out of the kitchen again and places herself at Maria's side and she grabs hold of the leash)

>
Daria: Um....heads up,..chin up,....let's go?

>
Maria: I'm sorry Daria, I'm afraid only Jane does that little phrase any justice. You should try coming up with your own little catch phrase.

>
Daria: Somehow I don't think "damn the torpedoes" would do me any justice. Besides, I hear it's taken.

>
Maria: There can be only one??

>
Daria: No, that's my world domination slogan. I plan to use it when I slaughter the countless morons and crown myself absolute monarch of the world.

>
Maria: How about hell is other people, so lets run away from them as quickly as possible.

>
Daria: Oh hell, let's just go.

>
Maria: That works too. (The both of them head out the door to Daria's car and leave)

>
(Cut to Daria's escort as they make their way out onto the main highway. Daria slows the car as she yields to oncoming traffic and then accelerates as quickly as the car can. The engine is obviously struggling with this task but once it is up to speed it seems to be able to hold it's own on the road)

>
Maria: This car sounds a bit tired Daria, have you thought about retiring it?

>
Daria: Yea, probably soon. I'm trying to hold onto this one as long as I can, I really don't want to be in debt for five years just so I can have another car.

>
Maria: Don't make it sound so bad, at least YOU can drive. I'd give it a try myself but I'm afraid our chances of getting where we want to go would be astronomically slim, especially without getting somebody killed. (Several moments of silence pass) So what is it that you wanted to check out at this particular section of the shore? I mean, I know there's a beach at least half an hour closer. My parents have taken me there several times.

>
Daria: I just have the urge to check THIS one out.

>
Maria: (Shrugs) Okay, does this place have a name?

>
Daria: Barnegate light.

>
Maria: I'm sensing an underlying reason here, care to share it with me? Or do I have to remain even more in the dark than I already am.

>
Daria: (waits a moment and then decides to give) I've been having this reoccurring dream about a a light house down at the shore.

>
Maria: Cool, what happens in the dream?

>
Daria: Nothing, but that's not what bothers me. I just keep having this simple benign dream several times a week for the past month. I'm just standing on a roadway near the beach at night, and every now and then I hear a foghorn and the beam from a lighthouse crosses over me. I figure regardless of content, if a dream keeps reoccurring so often it's GOT to mean something.

>
Maria: COOL! What do you think it means?

>
Daria: How should I know, Do I look like a psychoanalyst?

>
Maria: I don't know, You told me of how your father goes off and rants all the time. Maybe you finally have the experience to qualify as one. Anyway, the dream probably means SOMETHING, it's just extremely vague.

>
Daria: That's putting it lightly.

>
Maria: So that's why you were looking for Jane? You were hoping she could help you figure this whole thing out?

>
Daria: I was hoping BOTH of you could help me. . Frankly, trying to figure it out is driving me nuts because there are no symbolic clues to draw upon.

>
Maria: So your hoping going to a place with a lighthouse will help you figure it out.

>
Daria: It's worth a shot at the very least.

>
Maria: Sounds like a plan to me.. (Thinks for a moment) I'm sure Jane didn't mean to leave without saying goodbye.

>
Daria: Yea, I know. It's just so unlike her, even when she's mad at me for something she still tells me about when and where she's going.

>
Maria: Eh, I wouldn't worry your head off about it. Maybe she left a message and you just missed it or something. (Maria rolls her window down all the way after remembering that the AC does not work in Daria's car. Upon doing so Cheyenne is quick to stuff her head past Maria's headrest and sticks it out the window to let her ears flap in the wind.)

>
Daria: I guess it's possible, I DID forget to bring my cell phone with me today.

>
(The scene cuts to Jane and Trent)

>
(Trent and the rest of Mystic Spiral are busy loading the van out side of a pub in Sicklerville after their latest performance on the road. Jane is in the front seat of the van attempting to account for how much money the band had taken in on their little tour and how much was going out to expenses. Trent finishes loading the last amplifier into the van and slams the door shut. He then proceeds to the front of the van where Jane is situated presently trying to correct a mistake in her calculations.)

>
Trent: (As he approaches the passenger side door of the van) Hey Janie, how are the figures coming?

>
Jane: (smacks her pencil down in frustration as she gives up on the books long enough to talk to Trent) They're coming along slowly but I'll get there. Damned mathematics, you make a small mistake halfway through your work and it screws up the whole damned thing.

>
Trent: Whoa Janie, take it easy. We're not in a rush so we've got plenty of time.

>
Jane: Yea, but I'd like to get this done before we actually need money for gas. And once this beast of a van gets on the road that could be pretty damned soon.

>
Trent: I suppose, but like I said we're not in a rush or anything. (Beat) Hey Jane, how come you didn't invite Daria along with us. She always comes with us on a road trip.

>
Jane: Eh, road trips were never her thing. I dunno, I just didn't think she'd want to be cooped up in a van with us for the day.

>
Trent: It's never bothered her before, why would it start to now?

>
Jane: (Shrugs) I don't know really, just lately I've had this feeling that I should probably give Daria some space before we all go off to college. We've had our share of arguments during my break up with Tom, and even a few after. I've kind of made it a habit of jumping down her throat a lot if you know what I mean.

>
Trent: That's funny, I thought you two had completely resolved that problem.

>
Jane: You mean me jumping down Daria's throat? (Jokingly) We did, I made it pretty clear that I'm not the deep throat kind of

girl.

>
Trent: (smiles) Whatever.

>
Jane: Anyway,... It still seemed kind of awkward, I was afraid we'd end up having another argument if we were stuck together for too long.

>
Trent; Hmm, I suppose. But I doubt it would have been anything the two of you couldn't have worked out. Your friendship has lasted this long, I don't think it's going anywhere.

>
(Jesse comes out of the back door to the pub and calls over to Trent)

>
Jesse; Hey Trent, we're all done with the stuff. Max and I are going to grab a bite to eat before we get going.

>
Trent: No problem, we'll be in ourselves in a bit. (Jesse turns and heads back into the pub and Trent continues his talk with Jane)

>
Jane: (Waits until Jesse disappears from sight before she resumes where she left off) Yea, I guess. (Jane makes an attempt to change the subject and divert the attention away from her and Daria) But speaking of dragging people along, why didn't YOU bring Maria. You two have been together for a while, don't you suppose it's about time you started dragging her everywhere you go, addressing her as the old ball and chain, various little displays of affection like that?

>
Trent: What brought THAT up?

>
Jane: (gives an evil grin just before she gives her reply) Just turning the tables amigo. So what gives, I've never seen you kiss her or do any of that obnoxious stuff guys do.

>
Trent: What?

>
Jane: You know, grab her ass or other parts of her anatomy. Manly Stuff like that.

>
Trent; (Smiles briefly) You KNOW I'm not like that Jane. (Beat) I don't know, I really care about her. We definitely click and stuff but....when we're alone, I just feel weird about myself. Like I'm taking advantage of her and stuff. You know?

>
Jane: She's blind Trent, not stupid. Her other four senses give her a pretty good idea of what your up to.

>
Trent: Yea, I guess. I still feel weird I guess, I'd feel better if I knew what she wanted.

>
Jane: I swear you're hopeless Trent. If you feel so awkward then why didn't you go after somebody who you WERE comfortable with. Daria for instance, you know she liked you for the longest time.

>
Trent: Yea, well...Daria's a good friend, but there wasn't anything more between us than a crush. Daria's great, she's smart and funny and she's great outlook on things . But I just never felt it you know. And then when I let the two of you down on that school project....I just knew more than ever that it couldn't work between us. I just haven't gotten around to getting my act together yet, and Daria. Well, she won't have any problems getting started in life. I'd be holding her back and she'd never be able to realize her dreams or anything.

>
Jane: The only dream Daria has is surviving long enough to get away from her parents.

>
Trent; That's everybody's dream, Jane.

>
Jane: True, but Daria's parents are especially screwed up. So that makes her dream a lot more real than any of ours.

>
Trent: (Laugh/coughs) I guess you've got a point there, but still. I just don't feel anything with Daria, I wanted to... but it just wasn't there.

>
Jane; (pinches her sinuses) Okay, fine. But clear one thing up

for me, what the hell is there between you and Maria that wasn't there between you and Daria? I mean she must have some pretty damned redeeming qualities for you to go after her instead of Daria.

>
Trent: Daria only had a crush on me Janie, they fade after time and most of them never work out even if you do hook up for a while .

>
Jane; (Sighs) Yea, I know. I just can't help feeling the way I do. And YOU ya big dork, I worked as hard as possible trying to get you and Daria together and you fall for her FRIEND at a funeral for gods sake. Now tell me if that's not a severe case of back stabbing?

>
 Trent: Daria and I were never together, so I can't see how I stabbed anyone in the back. Your just pissed because you're scheming backfired. It's hard to say really why things happened they way they did. I admit finding a girlfriend at a funeral wasn't my idea of a way to get a date but she tripped and fell into my arms and I don't know, something just clicked I guess.

>
Jane; Yet you feel awkward and like you're taking advantage of her in some way when your together?

>
Trent: Only when we're alone, like in a way where we could be intimate or something.

>
Jane: Why don't you just make a move on her a see what happens, maybe it's all just in your head. Maybe something freaky will happen like, oh I don't know. Maybe she'll LIKE it.

>
Trent: (smiles) I just know what my conscience tells me.

>
Jane: I swear I'll never understand you, Trent.

>
Trent: (Laugh/coughs) That's cool, I don't think I'll ever understand MYSELF.

>
Jane; Not until it's too late, anyway. I still say you should Give Daria another try, I'd bet my life savings that it could work between the two of you.

>
Trent: You don't HAVE a life savings, you don't even have a job yet.

>
Jane: Exactly, it's a win, win situation for me. I have nothing to lose.

>
Trent; Whatever, look Let's just go get some breakfast.

>
Jane: What? Don't tell me your forfeiting the argument.

>
Trent: Nope, just suspending it until after Breakfast.

>
Jane: (sighs) Dammit....

>
Trent; What?

>
Jane: (looks down at the ground) I just realized something you and Maria have in common.

>
Trent: Your kidding, what's your discovery?

>
Jane: (looks up at Trent and Smirks evilly) You both have an appetite from hell. (Trent Laugh/coughs)

>
Trent: Well,... lets hurry up and eat so I can send it back to hell where it belongs.

>
Jane: Wouldn't that be cruel and unusual punishment? I mean, why do you think your stomach escaped in the first place?

>
Trent; Simple, it knew that with me it would be well fed.

>
Jane; And it sure called that one right didn't it. (Snaps her fingers) I know how I can get you and Daria together, I should just lock you both in the bathroom together. It's only a matter of time before one of you has to go and then you'll have no choice but to

show off your equipment to each other. Even Daria has to have hormones SOMEWHERE in her body.

>
Trent: (lifts an eyebrow) You've got a sick mind Janie.

>
Jane: (Takes a bow) Thank you, where do you think all of my artistic talent stems from. (Thinks for a moment) So what was your first clue anyway?

>
Trent: About what?

>
Jane: That you clicked.

>
Trent: (Thinks for a moment) I dunno really, it just did.

>
Jane: What no heart palpitations, no weak knee's, no classic symptoms of that sort?

>
Trent: Not really, I mean the hair on the back of my neck stood on end but that was about it. Probably because her fall was unexpected and I jumped to catch her or something.

>
Jane: (Shakes her head) Hair standing on end huh, sounds like a load of static to me.

>
(The two of them walk into the pub to join Jesse and Max before beginning their day long trek back to Lawndale)

>
(Cut to Daria, Maria and Cheyenne on the boardwalk about an hour and a half later)

>
(From Daria's position on the boardwalk she can see the light house which isn't that far off now, maybe about a half mile. She would have parked closer but with summer traffic there just weren't any closer parking spaces to be found. The one that Daria DID find was not a designated beach parking spot but one with a parking meter. As a result Both Daria and Maria were forced to empty their pockets of any silver and feed it to the meter to avoid getting a ticket during the course of the day. Maria didn't seem to mind the walk as this was an opportunity to get out and go somewhere other than around the neighborhood)

>
Maria: (inhales deeply) I love the smell of the ocean.

>
Daria: Maybe YOU do, it just reminds me of how far I'd have to travel to get away from Lawndale.

>
Maria: By all means then, start swimming. Let me know when you get to Scotland so you can look up some of my relatives.

>
Daria: No thanks, I have this fear deep down inside that I'll meet the loch ness monster first and he'll want to engage me in some sort of odd conversation.

>
Maria: Hmm...you may have a point, being so old a legend it will probably just want to reminisce about the old days or the people it's eaten. And it's a Her...

>
Daria: Excuse me?

>
Maria: The loch ness monster, it's supposed to be a her.

>
Daria: It's just a stupid legend, does it really make that much of a difference?

>
Maria: Hey, just keeping the facts straight.

>
Daria: (smirks) This from a person who hides an accent in an attempt to avoid being made fun of as a child.

>
Maria: (scowls in irritation) It's no worse than you trying to hide the fact that you actually give a crap in an attempt to keep everyone else as far from you as possible. We all cope in our own way, it's one of the benefits of being your own person. Don't you agree?

>
Daria: I admit to nothing, but I agree with you on that last point. I'd rather be my own person than associate with anyone

remotely similar to the fashion club back in high school.

>
Maria: So Basically what your saying is that you would prefer to avoid about ninety nine point three percent of the people on the planet.

>
Daria: I think you left out a few decimal places, we want to get the facts straight remember.

>
Maria: (Laughs) And you make it sound like it was so long ago, and yet if you look on a calendar it's only a matter of weeks. I hate it the way time screws with you like that.

>
Daria: I'm sure the elderly population of this planet would be able to sympathize.

>
Maria: In the few cosmic seconds they have left to live anyway.

>
Daria: (laughs and then assumes a more serious face) I don't suppose we could get back to the task at hand?

>
Maria: (Sighs) Look Daria, I know you've got a lot of things on your mind bugging you, and I know we came here to try and resolve at least one of them. But to my knowledge, neither one of us has been to the shore at all since summer began so as long as were down here can't you at least try to enjoy yourself a little bit? Besides, we'll both be heading off to college in the fall so who knows when we'll be able to hang out again.

>
Daria: I guess it wouldn't hurt TOO much. I just would feel better if Jane were here.

>
Maria: Yeesh, I didn't know I was such lousy company.

>
Daria: (looks hurt) I'm sorry, I didn't mean it like that.

>
Maria: I know, you just worry about your friendship with Jane to much for your own good. Your arguments were never as traumatizing to your friendship as you make them out to be. Just give it some more time. I'd bet you five bucks that there's a pretty good reason why she left without saying anything. Anyway....last time I checked I was your friend too, right?

>
Daria: Of coarse.

>
Maria: Good, Then lets go have some fun. The answers your looking for are more likely to present themselves to you when your NOT looking for them.

>
Daria: You WOULD have to make a good point. So what sort of "fun" did you have in mind?

>
Maria: You've got me, you're the one with functioning retinas. Take a look around and tell me what you see.

>
Daria: Well, on a disappointing note for YOU. The surf has calmed down a lot more than I thought it would have. People are going in the water without a problem, we could have gone in like you wanted to if we had brought our suites.

>
Maria: (Smiles evilly at the mention of swim suites) Not a problem, there's a lot of stores on the boardwalk from what I'm told. I'm sure ONE of them would be able to supply us with something that fits. Or at least something that would fit YOU.

>
Daria: What? No way...Jane tries to railroad me into stuff like that all the time, and I hate to shop for clothes.

>
Maria: Yea, but there's difference. Jane would try to get you to buy the most uncomfortable and revealing thing she could find, at least that's what Trent tells me. Where as I would have no idea HOW you look in it. I'd just care if it fits.

>
Daria: Good, then you won't mind if we shop for yours first.

>
Maria: Well that could be a problem.

>
Daria: (grins evilly) Don't worry, I won't pick out anything for you that I wouldn't want to wear myself.

>
Maria: So I take it your going to pick out a swim suit with legs on it?

>
Daria: I'm not THAT bad, but now that you mention it. It probably would be a lot more comfortable than the stuff they try to squeeze you into these days.

>
Maria: So find us a store that your comfortable with then.

>
Daria: We could be searching all day for a store like THAT

>
Maria: In that case just pick one, either that or I'll have Cheyenne lead us from store to store until we find the right one. And she's not very particular about stuff like that either, she could decide to lead us in circles through the same few stores all day long.

>
Daria: All right already, I'll pick one myself.

>
Maria: So glad I could help in the decision making process. So what stores are in the vicinity?

>
Daria: Nothing of any real interest, mostly arcades and stores selling food or useless junk.

>
Maria: Well, we'll just keep walking then. Where's that lighthouse from here?

>
Daria: Down at the northern end of the boardwalk from what I can tell.

>
Maria: Cool, then we can do something fun and still head towards your objective for the day.

>
Daria: Are you mocking me or something.

>
Maria: Would I do that to you?

>
Daria: You tell me.

>
Maria: No, I'd much rather continue a pleasant and intelligent conversation with you. For two main reasons, want to know what they are?

>
Daria: Oh please, do enlighten me.

>
Maria: Absolutely, one you're my friend and I understand that your bothered by what may or may not have transpired during the course of the day, and two you're my ride home so pissing you off would be counter productive.

>
Daria: (smirks) So your day rests in my hands does it?

>
Maria: That's about the size of it.

>
Daria: Good, then we can forego the clothes shopping. If by some act of god that we do get wet, then we get wet and we get to go home tonight with our shoes making that squishy, squishy sound like they're a sponge full of water.

>
Maria: Oh good, then I DO have something to look forward to.

>
Daria: Yea, yea...just make sure that you dry off your dog if she gets wet. Wet seats I can deal with, wet dog not only looks nasty but it smells down right awful.

>
Maria: (shrugs) Yea so? We can put that little air freshener you have hanging from the radio knob to the test. We already know it's capable of taking over the scent of the entire car. What made you put such a powerful little bugger in your car anyway. Did you have some sort of bad experience in there at some point? Maybe there was a day where you were a little less than fresh?

>Daria: (Daria gives Maria a light punch in the arm) That'll be enough of the menstrual cycle jokes if you don't mind.

>Maria: Ow! (Rubs her shoulder) Who's talking about THAT? I was referring to B.O , I know Trent tends to come back from Mcgrundies

smelling a little rank after he plays a gig there. I just thought that since you hang out with him from time to time at the same place that maybe..you know.

>Daria: You noticed his little problem too huh?

>Maria: I make that boy take a shower if he ever comes over directly from a gig. Bastard, he's embarrassed to let me come in with him too.

>Daria: Aha...an even better subject than Trent's little B.O. problem. Let's talk about you and Trent for a bit, maybe I can make you come down with a special little rash.

>Maria: Oh god..., if I could see where my knees were going to land I'd drop down on them and beg you for mercy. I don't suppose we could change the subject?

>Daria: Oh no, You tried to make me go clothes shopping, now you pay the penalty my friend. So give, You say you spend as much time with Trent as you can. What do the two of you do?

>Maria: (sighs reluctantly) Um...not much really. We talk, we go out from time to time, and that's pretty much it.

>Daria: What, no fun time? You've been going out for about a year now, you can't tell me you don't fool around at all.

>Maria: (Shakes her head no) Nope....I don't understand it either. Am I a turn off or something?

>Daria: I'm not really the person you would look to for an answer on a question like that.

>Maria: I get the feeling that he wants to from time to time when we're alone, but then for some reason he backs off. I mean, DAMN. Not even a kiss yet. I don't know Daria, maybe I should get Jane to try and play match maker with us or something, she told me that she used to do it with you and Trent before I came along.

>Daria: Jane told you that I used to have a thing for Trent? Why that little traitorous.....

>Maria: It's no big deal, Daria. I can understand why you liked him so much, but...and please don't take this the wrong way....I'm glad it didn't work out between you two.

>Daria: Um..okay, I'm not sure if I should feel slighted or not.

>Maria: I hope you don't, I may not be getting any....but know how I feel about him.

>Daria: (Feeling a bit uncomfortable) WELL....now that we've thoroughly covered the topic of your sex life we can change the subject now. Yes..definitely I think we can change the subject now.

>Maria: Okay, let's talk about what happened with you and any love life you may or may not have.

>Daria: (scowls) Let's NOT.

>Maria: Okay then, um....how about your dream. Have you come across anything on our little walk that could give you some sort of insight into it?

>Daria: No...I think,..... (Daria is interrupted by a familiar voice from behind them. Daria turns around to discover that Jodie is walking up to them at a fast pace.)

>Jodie: Daria! (Maria now turns to face the person speaking) Hey Maria, it's good to see you too.

>Maria: I wish I could say the same thing. By the way, who are you?

>Jodie: It's me....Jodie, from highschool. I was the senior class president. (Notices by the expression on Maria's face that she still doesn't remember her.) I showed you around when you first came to the school.

>Maria: OH....Oh, okay. Now I remember you. You kept trying to get me

to join extra curricular activities from day one.

>Jodie: Yea, that's pretty much how everybody remembers me.

>Daria: I know that's how I did. So what's up? How did you manage to escape your bondage to college preparation that your parents delivered you into straight from birth?

>Jodie: I didn't. (Jodie holds up a stack of pamphlets that she is carrying) I'm down here at the shore doing community service for the blood drive. (She holds up a leaflet) See, blood supplies are really low this year so I'm trying to get people to stop by the blood mobile at the high school in this area to donate blood.

>Daria: What, no shredding of some senators incriminating documents this summer? How did you weasel your way out of that one?

>Jodie: I Didn't, the guy I was supposed to work for got busted on some sort of racketeering scam. SO I had to pick an alternative, and frankly this option beat out all of my other choices by far.

>Daria: Hey, nothing says I beat the system like getting people to willingly open their veins for you.

>Jodie: Maybe you guys should donate, you might save somebodies life.

>Daria: No thanks, a vampire got most of mine and I'm afraid if I lose anymore I'll become like HIM.

>Maria: I don't know, flying around at night and killing people off doesn't sound like such a bad change of pace, not to mention that you'd be able to fulfill your dream of spreading rabies.

>Daria: No, that was Jane's dream.

>Jodie: (Shakes her head) And what about you Maria, what's YOUR excuse for not giving?

>Maria: (Shivers) Ugh...needles. Not a chance in hell, I've always been worried that my doctor will someday try to shove one right into my eyeball. I've been wondering about that guy for the longest time.

>Jodie: (looks at her in disgust and then sighs) Well, it was worth a try at least. So what are the two of you up too? I didn't expect to see you down at the beach, Daria.

>Daria: Not a whole lot really, just doing a little bit of research but we keep getting sidetracked by personal amusements.

>Jodie: Like what?

>Maria: We some how got on the topic of Trent's B.O and it sort of went from there.

>Jodie: (Looks disgusted) Isn't that topic a bit childish?

>Maria: Probably, but it still beats sitting at home talking about nothing at all.

>Jodie: Please tell me that this one topic, regardless of how personally amusing it may have been, didn't dominate your conversation for the whole day.

>Daria: No, just for about five minutes or so. Then you came along and we started talking about people cutting their wrists willingly so they can give their contaminated aids infected blood to someone else.

>Maria: Don't you just love her outlook on things? Now I know why I like her so much.

>Jodie: I'm not even going to ask.

>Daria: You'd be much better off, trust me. So did you want to take a break and hang out with us or something? I'm sure it would be a lot more interesting than handing out pamphlets asking people to slit

their wrists for a good cause.

>Jodie: I wouldn't put it so Gothically, but I could use a break. I've been at this since early this morning and I REALLY don't think I'm getting anywhere.

>Maria: You mean people actually thought you were asking them to commit suicide, which caused them to ponder their meaningless existence only to discover the fact that life really does suck so what's the point?

>Daria: (stares at Maria) I thought dishing out the cynical remarks was supposed to be MY job.

>Jodie: (shakes her head) Well so far my day has gone something like this, about three quarters of the people I encountered today totally blew me off like they didn't see me or something. And the rest of them took pamphlets only to have me see them throw it away about two minutes later. So all in all, I've come to the conclusion that people just flat out don't give a damn anymore.

>Maria: (turns in Daria's direction) She's just NOW figuring that out?

>Daria: You know, you can't blame her for having some sort of optimism.

>Jodie: (smiles in light of Daria's support) Thanks Daria.

>Daria: If there were no optimists in the world, How would we have a basis for comparison to show us that life really DOES suck.

>Jodie: (frowns) HEY!!

>Daria: Just a little friendly humor there Jodie.

>Jodie: Whatever... listen, are you guys serious about wanting to get something to eat?

>Daria: Yea, I guess we've starved Maria for long enough. What are you in the mood for?

>Jodie: Preferably something with as little grease in it as possible.

>Daria: (looks around at the local food stands to see just about every greasy food you could imagine being cooked up.) Oh yea, good luck finding something like that around here.

>Jodie: I wonder what heart attack potential that food has.

>Daria: Well, I can't tell you the exact figures but I can tell you it probably has a very high blood coagulation factor.

>Jodie: How reassuring, lets just keep walking until we find something a little more palatable. How about it?

>Daria: Works for us, lead the way. (A rumble of thunder is heard from not very far off and heads quickly turn to the sky above to see an ominous mass of dark clouds settling over the area)

>Jodie: Um...I think that may have to wait, nature seems to have other plans for the people at the shore today.

>Daria: Wonderful, and here I was perfectly content with staying all nice and dry.

>(The winds begin to pick up at Daria's mention of staying dry followed by a few large rain drops here and there which over a period of several minutes grow more and more numerous until a hard steady rain has developed along with a brisk wind. Daria, Maria, Jodie, and Cheyenne all moved to seek cover as soon as the first rain drops began to fall. Finding only an awning out in front of an old shop available for cover as most of the stores had closed their doors in light of the deteriorating weather.)

>Daria: Well this is just peachy, how long do you think we can stay here without catching some form of pneumonia?

>
Maria: (is about to reply optimistically when a sudden high gust

of wind blows the once steady downward falling rain into a slant thus invading their once dry space for a moment or two.) On second thought...maybe not long at all.

>
Jodie:(chuckles at her now soaked comrade) Um... maybe you should have worn a T-shirt that was other than white in color, Maria.

>
Maria: What,....why?

>
Daria: Because your shirt is soaked now.

>
Maria: Okay, I'm in the dark in more ways than one here, what happens to a white shirt when it gets wet?

>
Daria: Let's just say it's a good thing all the guys retreated indoors already or they would be getting a peep show. (Extends her arm and grabs hold of Maria's shirt pulling it away from her skin before letting go) There, that's a little better at least.

>
Jodie: Well, either way we have to get out of this rain before we end up swimming home. (Jodie tries the door to the old shop behind them and to her surprise it is unlocked) Hey, it's open!

>
Daria: Good, then lets hope they don't have a rule about loitering.

>
Maria: What?

>
Daria: (pushes Maria forward as Jodie opens the door) IN!

>
(Jodie follows Daria and Maria as they enter the old shop which once inside appears to be one of those old Tarot card shops. Where people claiming to be psychics try to cheat people out of a buck. The place has appears to have been around for about as long as the boardwalk itself, towards the back wall there are burn marks here and there along the seams where two walls meet indicating that the building had once survived a fire. There is dust covering most of the old jars on the shelves as well as a counter top off to one side, this place was probably once a pub or something Daria thought to herself)

>
Maria: (sniffs the air) This place smells pretty old, is there anybody even in here besides us?

>
Daria: Not unless the place is haunted, it doesn't look like anybodies been here for quite some time.

>
Jodie: It's just as well I guess, at least nobody will have a problem with us hanging around until the storm passes.

>
(A few moments later a young brunet wearing a cobalt blue dress and a small diamond pendant around her neck appears out of a doorway in the back of the room, and as soon as she see's the visitors she turns back through the doorway and says something in Russian.)

>
Maria: (Perks her head up) So much for your haunting theory, Daria.

>
Daria: Okay, so the people who own this place aren't exactly neat freaks. Who knew?

>
(A few moments later An elderly but stocky Russian woman comes slowly though the doorway at the back of the room while leaning on a cane while she walks, she is followed by the young brunet who had come into the room earlier)

>
Russian woman: (heavy accent) Ah my god, we have visitors.

>
Daria: (turns to Jodie) Is it me or did we see this scene once in an old mob film? (Jodie just looks at Daria and shrugs)

>
Russian woman: (Makes her way over to a chair near where the group is standing and has a seat on a dusty old cushioned chair. You

can almost hear her old bones creak as she does so) Eh...it's so hard to get around when you get to be my age. Is true, yes?

>
Daria: Uh...I guess so.

>
Russian woman: Ah look at the window, it takes so little time for the weather to turn sour. It saddens my heart so. (The young brunet says something in Russian to the old woman) Ah forgive me, Young ladies this is my assistant Laura. She helps me with my errands during my day.

>
Jodie: And you are?

>
Russian woman: Ah...when you get to be my age names are no longer as important as they once were. I assume the weather brings you to my doorstep, yes?

>
Maria: You could say something like that, yea. (Cheyenne looks at the old woman oddly and suddenly leaves Maria's side to approach the old woman)

>
Russian woman: Ah, a big dog. She is your seeing eye companion?

>
Maria: Your observant, most people take a good while to even notice that I can't see.

>
Russian woman: (Groans) The world is covered in ignorance, child. Take pity on such people.

>(Cheyenne begins to actively sniff about the old woman's feet and then about her dress, before letting out a weird bark and relieving herself on the woman's left foot)

>Jodie: Oh my god, Maria....call your dog!

>Maria: Cheyenne, ...come!! (Cheyenne lets out a grunt at the old woman and a cheerful bark this time before returning to Maria's side) Did she do what I think she did?

>Daria: And then some.

>Jodie: Oh god, we're sorry. Her dog is, well.... you know what, I don't know what the dogs problem is. But I'm sure we can replace the shoes if they can't be cleaned.

>Russian woman: (Gives the dog a sour look before returning her attention to Jodie and the others) Do not fret it, I have suffered worse in my time. (She removes her shoes and tosses them over into the nearby corner) So what can I do for you today?

>Daria: Simple, don't toss us back out into the rain. That way we can avoid any problematic health issues.

>Russian woman: I do not care for how long you stay, in my age it gives me something to do with my day. I meant what can I do for you as long as you are here.

>Daria: Well, that all depends one what it is that you do here during the course of the business day.

>Russian woman: Oh I dabble in all sorts of things, some of it's a ruse, some of it isn't.

>Daria: Let me guess, You're a self proclaimed psychic or something and you want to read our palms,... and then possibly suck some money from us, right?

>Russian woman: Such a bite for a tongue so young, not everybody is out to make a buck these days. As I said before, I'm getting up in the years and there's not much any more to fill my day like there once was. If I can pass some time and maybe teach somebody something in the process, than maybe perhaps it is worth the effort to an old woman. (Daria wears a slightly hurt expression for only a moment before returning to her stoic face)

>Jodie: (apologetically) Your right, and we're sorry. What did you have in mind again, palm reading?

>Russian woman: (swats at the air) Ah.....that old game is for phonies trying to cheat those who are gullible and willing to believe anything to get ahead. I don't tell the future very well, the

cards....they can only seem to foretell the very near future, and even then it is never one hundred percent. Personally, I like to look into a persons eyes and tell them things about themselves that supposedly only they know, and sometimes things that they don't. It is a challenge for myself, I like to think.

>Daria: (unimpressed) Do tell?

>Russian woman: It is so, ...you do not believe me? (Daria turns to look at Jodie who only shrugs back at her)

>Jodie: Ah hell, it doesn't look like we're going to be going anywhere anytime soon. Can you show us what you mean?

>Russian woman: I thought you would never ask child. (Turns to Daria and Maria) Do you wish to participate, or remain a skeptic?

>Daria: And miss the chance to see you miss most of the answers to our questions? No way, we're in on it.

>Maria: Ah hell, what have I got to loose?

>Daria: She could always mistake eye of newt for something else and accidentally switch YOUR mind with your dogs. (Jodie laughs in the background at this)

>Russian woman: So who would like to participate first? (Daria and Jodie both exchange looks of indecision, Maria just stares ahead seemingly oblivious to their motions however her dog has positioned herself between Maria and the old Russian woman.)

>Daria: Ah hell, why not. It should be good for a laugh at least. (Takes a step forward)

>Russian woman: Thank you child, I was beginning to think you would all change your minds leaving me with another wasted day in my life.

>Daria: So glad I could be of service.

>Russian woman: Have a seat child.

>Daria: Um okay, where? (The young brunet brings over a chair for her to sit on) Guess that solves THAT mystery. (She takes a seat and looks around) Not much for cleaning around her are you.

>Russian woman: (ignores Daria's last comment and removes Daria's glasses for her) Now, let's take a look shall we.

>Daria: Hey, I need those back. I can't see without them.

>Russian woman: They will not go anywhere, and you do not need them for the moment. (The old woman leans forward and begins to gaze into Daria's eyes for several moments before saying anything. Finally she speaks) Interesting...such depth in a woman, this is a rare thing in today's world.

>Daria: You noticed the rarity thing huh?

>Russian woman: When I was your age, it was common for people to believe in their principals with such passion.

>
Daria: (VO) Wasn't that when there was a high risk that your family would be eaten by dinosaurs before they were twenty? (Out loud) Really, you don't say?

>
Russian woman: (chuckles) So you say out loud at least.

>
Daria: (looks slightly embarrassed to know that the woman could tell that Daria was thinking something sarcastic) Um...yea, I guess.

>
Russian woman: So back to the task at hand....

>
Daria: Ah yes, do tell. What have you discovered so far?

>
Russian woman: You use the bite of your tongue to hide your feelings from others, you do not wish them to become close to you.

>
Daria: I thought that was obvious to everybody at this point?

>
Russian woman: (looks amused and decides to go deeper) Your sister passed a while back, she came to an unfortunate end and you hide the pain from this incident deep within you.

>
Daria: (eyes widen for a moment) Okay, Now I'm slightly impressed. How did you know that?

>
Russian woman: How is not all that important, just that it's true.

>
Daria: All right, I'll grant you that. You got one right, congratulations. Have you anything else that you want to impress me with?

>
Russian woman: I could, ...but I get the feeling that you don't wish me to divulge anything else in the presence of your friends. You feel as though it would be an invasion of your privacy, yes?

>
Daria: You could say something like that, yes. So what's next?

>
Russian woman: That all depends on you, what would you like to know?

>
Daria: You're not going to try to talk to the dead are you. Try to convince me that you've contacted my sister or something.

>
Russian woman: (chuckles) I told you before that some of things you hear about my profession are a ruse to cheat idiots out of their money.

>
Daria: Yea?

>
Russian woman: That's one of them. I wouldn't insult you by trying such a thing.

>
Daria: Thank you for that.

>
Maria: (Speaks up) Let's hear your future, Daria.

>
Jodie: You don't really believe people can do that do you?

>
Maria: Who knows, I just want to listen to what gets said.

>
Russian woman: (sighs) I could consult the cards, but as I said before. They are not 100 percent accurate, in fact they can be down right vague. Do you still wish me to proceed?

>
Daria: Sure, I'm up for a game of cards. As long as it's not strip poker.

>
Russian woman: (her assistant brings her a deck of tarot cards and then pulls over a nearby end table) You have a unique sense of humor.

>
Daria: Hey, whatever passes the time until the rain lets up right.

>
Russian woman: That's been my position all along my dear. (Shuffles the cards and then begins to place one at a time on the table and then sighs) Well this is interesting.

>
Daria: Yes....?

>
Maria: (speaks up again) Hey, Daria doesn't get busted sometime down the road does she. I wouldn't mind listening to her beat the hell out of some dumb ass cop.

>
Russian woman: (rolls her eyes) Are you ready to hear this?

>
Daria: Sure, what else have I to do?

>
Russian woman: (sighs again) You've come to the shore on a small quest, you will find the answers you seek in a short time although they will not be immediately apparent when you find them. You will cross the path of a little mermaid during your travels home, when you do stay in that location until someone crosses your path.

>
Daria: Um.....right, a little mermaid, how cryptic. Right then,....Um,....I'll be sure to keep my eyes peeled. Do the cards say anything else?

>
Russian woman: (takes another look) Death is your friend, you have a long life ahead of you.

>
Daria: Why does that not make me feel any better?

>
Russian woman: Interpret it as you wish, but that is what I see in the cards.

>
Daria: (rolls her eyes) Great, well I think I've had my fill for the day some I'm going to relinquish the helm to another of my colleagues.

>
Russian woman: As you wish, who else wishes to participate.

>
Maria: Jodie, after you.

>
Jodie: Gee, thanks. (Walks forward and has a seat) Okay, lets hear it.

>
Russian woman: (Leans forward and looks into Jodie's eyes) You are pushed in your life a great deal, your parents are responsible for most of this, yes.

>
Jodie: Sounds like two for two so far, she's not so bad at this, Daria.

>
Russian woman: You have a man in your life, you have been seeing him for many years. You're feelings for him are strong, but you give them little time to grow.

>
Jodie: So far so good, what about my future?

>
Russian woman: (picks up the cards and puts them back in the deck) You do not need the cards, you already know what your future should be and how to make it happen. You need only to carry out your wishes, perhaps moving out on your own would benefit you greatly. Relieve the pressure from your family some.

>
Jodie: Gee thanks...so much,...I guess. (Jodie gets up)

>
Russian woman: A word of advice for you.

>
Jodie: (Stops) Yes?

>
Russian woman: This man you are seeing, you believe you will end up with him, yes?

>
Jodie: Anything's possible I guess, why?

>
Russian woman: You should take the time to show him your commitment to the relationship, spend time alone with him and expand upon your relationship.

>
Jodie: (looks awkward) Um.....Maybe some time, but I'm not sure if I'm ready for something like that right now. Uh...thanks for the advice.

>
Russian woman: Mere words unless listened to, then they become advice.

>
Jodie: Yea well, whatever. (Walks away from the chair)

>
Daria: What the hell was that about?

>
Jodie: You've got me. You still want your turn Maria? This woman seems to give out some weird advice if you ask me.

>
Maria: (Smiles) Wouldn't miss it. Forward Cheyenne. (Cheyenne leads Maria over to the chair and after a moment she finds her way into it)

>
Russian woman: (Removes Maria's dark glasses) Ah what pretty eyes....

>
Maria: I'll have to take your word on that.

>
Russian woman: So be it then. (Looks into Maria's eyes) This would be easier if you could hold them still for me.

>
Maria: Can't help you much there, I can't even tell that they're

moving.

>
Russian woman: Do you're best then. (After several moments) Ah, thank you child. That is much better. Hold it there for as long as you can.

>
Maria: It's a work in progress.

>
Russian woman: Tsk, tsk,....Why do you hide from yourself?

>
Maria: What?

>
Russian woman: You once hid from yourself because others were cruel to you. You thought that if you do not act as yourself, others will not see you for who you are?

>
Maria: And who am I?

>
Russian woman: (looks deeper into Maria's eyes) You're father once took a picture of you wearing an odd looking skirt....I believe you call it a kilt, yes? Blue with black stripes?

>
Maria: Family colors, at least that's what he told me.

>
Russian woman: You miss your home.

>
Maria: Not much to miss, I left when I was five.

>
Russian woman: The best memories are when you are young. This kilt, you have one that fits you now?

>
Maria: My dad got it for me a few years ago.

>
Russian woman: My advice to you,...Wear it for yourself once in a while. You will feel better if you allow yourself to be who you are, not what you think you SHOULD be.

>

>Maria: Um....okay, I guess. What else have you got to tell me?

>Russian woman: What is it you wish to know that you do not already.

>Maria: I don't know really, I was expecting something cryptic that I would have to figure out for myself. Like you told Daria, or you could play around with those cards I heard you shuffling earlier.

>Russian woman: (laughs) You know what you want, what you need to do is take the initiative. Do this and things will fall into place for you, trust me.

>Maria: I guess that's it then, thanks. (Starts to get up)

>Russian woman: Before you go, I have something for you.

>Maria: (sits back down) Really?

>Russian woman: (Her assistant brings over a small bowl with a clear liquid in it. The old woman dips her fingers in it, then places her hand over Maria's eyes and wipes them downward) It is not much but you will like it.

>Maria: (Pulls back) OW!! Dammit, that stings like hell.

>Russian woman: It will fade in a moment. (Leans back in her chair) And by the looks of the window the storm has moved on, I'm guessing you will wish to go on about your business soon.

>Daria: Um...That probably sounds about right I guess. Thanks for letting us hang out here.

>Russian woman: Thank you for giving me something to do with my afternoon. (Maria gets up and Cheyenne leads her toward her friends)

> (Daria, Jodie, Maria, and Cheyenne all make their way out of the same door that they came in through to find out that not only has the storm passed but it has also cleared up and is bright and sunny. As bright as it usually is in the late afternoon that is.)

>Jodie: (looking up at the sky) I can't believe the skies cleared up this quickly, I was expecting it to still be overcast, or mostly cloudy at the very least.

>Daria: (looks up as well) What, After a sudden storm like that we don't even get a rainbow? Isn't that a jip. (Looks over at Maria) Well, at least YOU got what you came down here for.

>Maria: (Perks her head up and turns in Daria's direction) What?

>Daria: You got wet just like you were hoping.

>Maria: I suppose, but I was hoping to go about it in an entirely different manner.

>Daria: Jodie and I could always toss you into the surf if you like.

>Maria: I'll pass, I'm wet enough for one day.

>Daria: Suit yourself.

>Jodie: Well, as much fun as all of this has been, I think It's about time I started heading back.

>Daria: (pretends to whine) But mom, our curfew isn't until nine.

>Jodie: (chuckles) I Hate to be the party pooper, Daria. But I have to get up at seven and come back down here again tomorrow to do the same thing all over again.

>Maria: So basically, it'll be like you're caught in a temporal loop and your doomed to repeat yourself for all eternity, only it's voluntary.

>Jodie: (an odd look appears on Jodie's face) Gee, when you put it like that it sounds like the high point of my life.

>Daria: So you might as well break out the razor blades now and do yourself a favor.

>Jodie: Not Quite, thanks. Even if it IS repeating the same events as today, I think I can manage to skip getting drenched in a rainstorm and then having a weird old woman tell me I need to get laid.

>Maria: I don't know, it didn't sound like such bad advice to me.

>Jodie: Oh yea, I can just picture myself listening to her right now.

>Maria: (pretends she's Jodie) So tell me Mike, will that be single or double bag tonight?

>Jodie: That's very nasty Maria.

>Maria: (shrugs) Sorry, my mind likes to wander in the mud sometimes.

>Daria: (smirks) And right now You're hip deep in it. (Maria laughs) (Daria turns to see the sun preparing to dip down below the horizon) Ah hell, I guess we might as well head back with you Jodie.

>Jodie: What made you change your mind, Daria?

>Daria: It's getting late, that's all.

>Maria: It's not anything else is it, or lack thereof?

>Daria: (scowls) NO!

>Maria: Okay, ...okay, just checking.

>Jodie: What's she talking about, Daria.

>Daria: Nothing important, Jodie.

>Jodie: (Looks slightly worried but then dismisses it) Okay.

>(The group turns to walk back in the direction from which they first came and we watch as they walk further and further away)

>(Cut to inside the old Shop)

> (The young brunet stands looking out from one of the front windows watching as Daria and her friends walk away from the shop)

>Russian woman: (Morph's into a taller and somewhat thinner man dressed in a suit that is gray from top to bottom and begins to talk in plain English.) They're not going to come back, Laura. So I don't know why you're staring out that window. (The brunet turns to face him)

>Laura: I'm not concerned about them coming back, (1) Nick. If you recall one of them is my assignment and I'm keeping an eye on her.

>Nick: You Guardian's, ...sometimes I think you worry about your job just a little TOO much.

>Laura: Powerful words coming from the mouth of fate, if YOU screw up you can just find a way to work it into the path that life follows. If I screw up, somebody gets hurt or dies.

>Nick: (shrugs) Okay good point , I take it back.

>Laura: (sighs) Okay, so I played along like you wanted. Now spill the beans, what was all that crap that was flying out of your mouth a while back?

>Nick: (Smiling from ear to ear) Just doing my job, that's all.

>Laura: Uh huh, and enjoying every minute of it as I can see rather well. Now spill it....

>Nick: Each of them has a path in life, I'm just getting the ball rolling.

>Laura: I'm seeing a lot of gum flapping here, yet I hear nothing.

>Nick: Need it in detail do you?

>Laura: Do bears defecate royally in the woods?

>Nick: (Almost laughs) I've set Daria up to find the answers to a dream she's been having,in a rather unique way you could say.

>Laura: Riiiiiiiiiiight,... what about the others? (Picks the bowl up with the liquid and sniffs it, then makes a face) What is this Visine that you rubbed on my assignments eyes?

>Nick: (chuckles) It made for a great effect don't you think? I planted some images in her mind to go along with many of her memories, that way...at least when she dreams, she'll get her wish of being able to see at times. Other than that, I just gave her some friendly advice.

>Laura: (frowns) You ARE an angel you know, you have the authority to perform small miracles. Why didn't you just give her the ability to see?

>Nick: It would have blown our cover and decimated everything I was trying to accomplish. I may have started them down a certain path, but they still have to make the choices on how to follow it. If I revealed myself, they would feel inclined to follow my instructions as fact and they would no longer be following their own lives as they saw fit.

>Laura: Eh, I suppose you may be right. Now What you told the Landon girl is what's really bugging me, why would you advise her to become sexually active.

>Nick: (defensively) Hey, I did it in a relatively subtle way.

>Laura: (crosses her arms) That's still completely unlike you, now what was you're motive for THAT?

>Nick: (shrugs) I had my reasons.

>Laura: Uh huh, you know when I was alive I wasn't known for having the curiosity of a cat for nothing. (Pulls a palmtop computer from somewhere behind her back and begins to call up some data.)

>Nick: Maybe, but that was back in the thirteen hundreds. Having the curiosity of a cat back then meant that you actually asked a guy questions instead of keeping your mouth shut.

>Laura: (ignores him) Jodie Landon, ...Jodie,... what's this goofball of a colleague up to..... Oh damn.....!

>Nick: (nods slowly) Yea, sucks huh?

>Laura: That early in life, ... a hysterectomy?

>Nick: Cancer can be a bitch, and it sucks even worse when we're not permitted to do anything about it. She might as well enjoy herself while she's young, and maybe have a kid while she's able to.

>Laura: (looks up from her computer with a sad face which slowly grows into a sly one) Giving her a head start on life are we?

>Nick: (coughs) Dammit, I think that softening heart of (2)Paul's is contagious.

>Laura: Maybe you're not such a jerk like everyone says after all.

>Nick: (smirks) No, I am. I'm just your kind of jerk. Anything else your itching to know?

>Laura: Yes, as a matter of fact there is. What was with the dog? Because the way she acted made that little incident seem more like an act of revenge than a natural reflex. (Pauses for an answer) Or is it just me?

>Nick: (mumbles) Yea,it was revenge.

>Laura: (grins from ear to ear) Care to enlighten me?

>Nick: I used her in one of my plans a while back and I guess she didn't take too kindly to it.

>Laura: Used her how?

>Nick: I jumped in front of her and scared the hell out of her.

>Laura: (laughs) And despite your little disguise she still recognized you.

>Nick: (Sniffs himself) Yea, I didn't even know I HAD a scent. (Walks over to Laura and places his hand on her shoulder) Come on, you've got somebody to watch and I've got work of my own to do. Let's get out of here shall we.

>Laura: Hey, not so close B.O. boy.

>Nick: Har, ..har, let's just go shall we? (Laura nods and they both walk towards the back of the shop fading from view as they go)

>(Cut to the beginning end of the board walk early that evening. The sun has already set taking with it the shadows that had chased everything that had been in direct sunlight for most of the day. The surroundings are now only made visible by the remaining twilight, and even that is fading quickly. Jodie had since parted with Daria and Maria given that her car was in a parking lot farther down the street, so she chose to stay on the boardwalk until she made it down to the correct cross street.)

>(Daria, Maria and Cheyenne approach Daria's old escort, Just before unlocking the car Daria stops to note the remaining time on the parking meter and then the ticket that is being held in place just underneath the drivers side windshield wiper)

>Daria: Dammit!!

>Maria: What?

>Daria: The meter ran out sometime before we got back and as a result I got a parking ticket. Dammit again!

>Maria: I'm sorry Daria, If I'd known we were going to be so long I would have brought more change with me.

>Daria: It's not your fault Maria, we were held up by the

weather.

>Maria: Held up by the weather...hmmm, sounds like something you'd hear on SSW.

>Daria: Excuse me?

>Maria: Meteorological mugging's, NEXT on sick sad world.

>Daria: (smiles) You know the world is sick when the weather turns to a life of crime. (Daria unlocks the car doors) Let me know if that dog has to go again, leather boots aren't exactly washable you know.

>Maria: I don't know what got into her earlier, I guess she just didn't like the woman for some reason.

>Daria: Don't take any chances, warn me if you can.
.

>Maria: No problem, if I open an umbrella then you'll know right off the bat. I'm sorry about the ticket, Do you want me to help you pay for it?

>Daria: (sighs) No, ...it isn't too bad. It's going to run me twenty five bucks, I can probably compensate by squeezing a bribe that out of my mom. I'll probably have to agree to let her do something to my room while I'm away at college. Worse comes to worse I have to cough up with my own money.

>Maria: You would let your mom touch your room, Are you feeling alright? I don't even know what mine looks like and I wouldn't let my mom touch it if she started cutting off my limbs one by one.

>Daria: I'm fine, thank you very much. Besides, I plan to find my own place by the time I'm done with school anyway. Preferably the sooner the better, my mom's increasing inquiries as to my whereabouts at any given time are becoming intolerable. I'm thinking of recording her as she badger's me over the phone and then I'll play it back to her while she's trying to sleep at night.

>Maria: Cruel and unusual retribution huh?

>Daria: Hey, anything else is just substandard.

>(Daria unlocks the car and they climb in to head for home)

>(Cut to fifteen minutes later)

> Daria is driving down a narrow two lane highway as she is just departing from the township of Barnegate, Apparently she is taking a different route home in an attempt to avoid the evening traffic from the shore. The surrounding seems to be a sort of wildlife preserve as can be noted by the fact that most of the brush and trees that thickly line either side of the road are completely wild in growth. Any remaining twilight has since faded and the road is only lit in front of the car as a result of Daria's driver side headlight.

>Daria: Dammit, I knew I shouldn't have waited to replace that damned thing. It's bad enough that there aren't any street lights.

>Maria: Replace what?

>Daria: A headlight.

>Maria: Blown headlights are bad, right?

>Daria: Unless I've suddenly become equipped with night vision, yea. I've still got the one though.

>Maria: If your luck holds out, that is.

>Daria: Out to jinx me are you?

>Maria: Not really, I'd like to make it home without any reassembly required if you don't mind.

>Daria: I think I can live with that, I haven't learned enough about the human anatomy yet to be able to piece you back together. I fear you'd end up in the same hole as humpty dumpty, and he's still

waiting for an egg shell donor.

>Maria: In that case Break out Jane's stickmata 5000 and get to work.

>(In the distance a small light can be seen on the side of the road, as the car gets closer to it, it becomes just distinguishable as the interior light of a roadside phone booth.)

>Daria: Well, I'll be damned.

>Maria: What, is Sasquatch thumbing a ride or something?

>Daria: No, but on this stretch of road it's probably just as unheard of.

>Maria: Well don't leave me on the edge of my seat here, what sort of mind boggling cosmic phenomena are we talking about?

>Daria: A sign of civilization, a phone booth to be specific.

>Maria: Your jumping up and down in your seat over a phone booth? We had to have passed at least one on the way here, right? What makes this one so special?

>Daria: Nothing, It's just the first of anything I've seen on this road so far.

>Maria: We're not taking the main highway?

>Daria: Back road, I was hoping to avoid the rush hour traffic. Shore traffic is always bumper to bumper this time of day.

>Maria: I've never actually noticed, lack of vision you know.

>Daria: You don't say, Good thing you told me. I might have asked you to drive us the rest of the way home.

>Maria: Wouldn't want that would we, unless you actually WANT a scenic tour of the woods.

>Daria: I'll pass on that one, thanks.

>Maria: Suit yourself.

>(A slight reflection of light catches Daria's eye from the far right as she is talking to Maria, for a moment Daria dismisses it as a reflection on her glasses from the dash lights until suddenly it moves to dart across the road and Daria comes to the realization that this would be reflection was actually Daria's parking lights reflecting off of the eyes of a deer, which has now decided to run out across the road in front of her car. Daria lets out a quick yelp and stomps on the brake peddle just before swerving the car into the other lane in an attempt to evade the animal but to no avail, the deer continues into the other lane maintaining it's position in front of Daria's car and a split second later, WHAM!! The escort impacts the deer crumpling the pathetic aluminum frame on the front of Daria's car and sending the deer several yards down the road still out in front of the battered old car. The escort comes to a skidding halt about the same time as the animal and thanks to the seat belt and driver side air bag, Daria and Maria are none the worse with the exception of being shaken up and experiencing some aches across the shoulder and chest area as a result of being held in place by the seat belts.
 Daria pushes her deflating airbag towards the steering column in an attempt to regain her bearings before turning to Maria who is groaning and holding her right shoulder)

>
Daria: Are you all right?

>
Maria: OW!! Dammit, what happened.

>
Daria: I said, Are you all right?

>
Maria: (Finds the clasp for her seatbelt and removes it, then proceeds to rub her shoulder some more) I'll live I guess, what the hell happened?

>
Daria: I think we hit a deer.

>
Maria: Wonderful, getting some practice in before moving up to humans are we?

>
Daria: (scowls) That's not funny, I didn't mean to hit it. It ran out in front of me. (A saddened look appears on Daria's face) Oh my god, I've killed an Deer! I'm an Deer killer!

>
Maria: Remind me to slap the cuffs on you later, right now I need to get out of this car and move around. Are there any cars coming?

>
Daria: (Achingly turns to look in the mirrors) Figures, not a soul in sight.

>
Maria: Fabulous, in an attempt to avoid traffic our pent up road rage turns to bambicide, NEXT on sick sad world. (Maria gropes around the door in search of the handle until she finds it and shoves the door open then slowly proceeds to stumble out of the car)

>
Daria: (As she exits through the driver side door) Don't try to make me feel better about this, I killed an innocent deer.

>
Maria: Who's trying to make YOU feel better, I'm trying to calm MYSELF down. Anyway, you said it walked out in front of you right? Who's to say the thing wasn't suicidal and just couldn't find a decent tree to hang itself from. Look around, maybe you'll find a note or something.

>
Daria: You know this really isn't time for jokes like that.

>
Maria: Better now than never, at least we're alive to tell them.

>
Daria: Good point. (Daria reaches back into the car and grabs a flashlight from under the drivers seat, then she turns it on and walks out in front of the car to where the deer is only to see it struggling to move while lying on the ground. There is blood on the asphalt from where one of the deer's front limbs came away from the shoulder joint on impact as well as several areas of missing fur revealing some nasty road rash) Oh my god,it's still alive!!

>
Maria: (turns in the direction of Daria's voice) Are you serious?? What the hell do we do with it now? I don't want to listen to the thing die slowly, can't we put it out of it's misery or something?

>
Daria: Yea right, I couldn't even shoot my own mother with a paint ball gun. Besides, we're exactly one gun short of actually having a gun to put the damned thing out of it's misery WITH.

>
Maria: (Shakes her head) Details, details,....So what then?

>
Daria: Well, there's that phone booth we passed about fifty yards back before THIS happened, We can at least call for help.

>
Maria: Well in that case get your butt over here and point me in the right direction,....Oh my god, Cheyenne!! Daria, where's my dog?

>
(Daria walks over to the car and looks in the back seat to see Cheyenne lying down on the floor with her paws covering her eyes.)

>
Daria: Cheyenne, are you all right? (The dog uncovers her eyes and grunts, then gets up and works her way out of the back seat and past Daria trotting to Maria's side) Looks like she's okay to me, I guess she just doesn't like the bumper cars.

>
Maria: (chuckles) Lets just call for help shall we?

>
Daria: I suppose that could be arranged. (Daria Walks up to Maria and places a hand on her shoulder to guide her and the two of them as well as the dog start walking down the road to the phone booth. After several minutes of walking they finally arrive at the booth, Daria picks up the receiver and is about to try to make a collect call when she notices that there is no dial tone. Daria Looks down at the phone and comes to a rather dubious realization, the phone cord is severed.) Oh you've GOT to be kidding me.

>
Maria: What is it?

>
Daria: Some kind, caring soul decided to take it upon his or her self to vandalize the phone by cutting the cord.

>
Maria: The phone's dead,... oh this is just getting better and better. We're on an isolated road with no one in sight, the car is smashed, there is a deer lying in the road dying slowly, and our only means of calling for help has been rendered inoperable by someone with nothing better to do with his or her time.

>
Daria: Feel better now that you've summed up the situation for us?

>
Maria: We're screwed Daria, what the hell are we going to do now?

>
Daria: How the hell should I know, give me a few minutes to... (Daria and Maria become the focus of an intense beam of light which subsides after a short moment as it moves away over the surrounding brush, a moment later a low fog horn is heard)

>
Maria: What the hell was that?

>
Daria (Looks towards the source of the light for a moment before replying) I guess somebody had the bright idea of getting the light house going for the night.

>
Maria: Bright idea,... light house. I get it.

>
Daria: Yea, funny as hell. I'm just splitting my sides over it under the circumstances. (Daria turns and is about to lead Maria back to the car when something glossy on top of the trash in the receptacle next to the phone booth catches her eye. Daria leans closer to check it out and notices that it is an empty case for a VHS cassette of Disney's "The Little Mermaid" complete with detailed pictures on the front. Daria Pauses as the words spoken by the old woman earlier in the day pass through Daria's mind.)

>
Maria: What are you doing, Daria?

>
Daria: Huh? Oh, nothing.

>
Maria: Um...okay, so you were saying something about what we were going to do next?

>
Daria: (Drums her fingers against her leg in thought then decides to dismiss the idea) The only thing I can think of to do at the moment is to walk back to the car and hope somebody comes along. Either that or we can build a fire and start sending smoke signals.

>
Maria: Somehow I don't think anybody in the area is familiar with that form of code, so I guess it's back to the car for us. Cheyenne, can you take me to the car girl? (The dog places herself in a position where Maria can find the leash and after she grabs hold, Cheyenne begins to lead her toward the car with Daria close behind)

>
(As Daria, Maria, and Cheyenne are arriving back at the car, a pair of headlights can be seen approaching their position from far in the distance)

>
Daria: I don't believe it, there's somebody on this god forsaken road besides us.

>
Maria: So flag the stupid shit down already. Or do you WANT to stay out here all night?

>
Daria: Can you wait until it gets closer? Whoever this is isn't

going to see us at this distance, especially in the dark.

>
Maria: Dammit, why is it that light has to play such an important role in sight anyway? (Daria doesn't reply, she just gives Maria an odd look)

>
(As the vehicle approaches within an acceptable distance Daria moves away from the car and is about to try to get the drivers attention when it becomes apparent that the driver has already seen them. A set of flashing blue lights comes to life on the vehicles roof and it slows until it comes along side of Daria and stops, the driver rolls down the window to reveal a stocky dark haired man with blue eyes. The man takes a long slow look around before saying anything.)

>
Man: (Scottish accent) Damned deer, you'd think that after the car was first invented the things would have eventually figured out that cars are dangerous. (Looks at Daria and then notices Maria silhouetted by his headlights in the background) Maria, what the hell are you doing here?

>
Maria: (Perks her head up as she recognizes the man's voice) Duncan...? I could say the same thing about you.

>
Duncan: I'm on my way to do a little surf fishing, my favorite spot is down this way. The blues down this way give up a righteous fight. What about you?

>
Maria: We're on our way back from the board walk and we ran into a little car trouble.

>
Duncan: An understatement to say the least, are you two all right?

>
Maria: We'll live.

>
Daria: You know this guy Maria?

>
Maria: Of coarse I know him, this is my older brother Duncan. Duncan, this is my friend Daria Morgendorffer. Daria, By brother Duncan Macleod.

>
Daria: (looks amused) Your name's Duncan Macleod? Let me guess, there can.... (Duncan cuts her off)

>
Duncan: DON'T say it, I hate those bloody jokes. It's been none stop since that damned series came out, I can't stand it.

>
Daria: Right then, in that case instead of a bad joke can you help us out?

>
Duncan: Aye, I thought you might be asking something like that sooner or later. Right then, no problem, never leave the house without a portable. (Daria lowers her head and begins to mutter to herself over having forgotten her own) How's the animal by the way?

>
Daria: (looks up) It's pretty gruesome, I hate to say it but I'm pretty sure it needs to be put down

>
Duncan: (gets out of the truck and follows Daria over to the deer) Bloody shame too, that's a nice buck. It'd be a shame to waste a nine pointer like that

>
Daria: (scowls) I don't suppose you could stop marveling at the catch long enough to call for some help?

>
Duncan: All right lass, don't get you're undie's in a bunch. (He pulls his cell phone out of his pocket and begins to dial as he walks back to the truck)

>
Daria: (mutters as she walks back over to Maria) Jerk!!

>
(About an hour later a state trooper appears on the scene along with a tow truck and someone from animal control. After the animal control officer haggles over the radio with the barracks captain the ok is finally given for the trooper to discharge his weapon. He waits for the tow truck to leave with Daria's car before moving in to carry

out this duty. As Daria, Maria, Duncan, and Cheyenne all climb in to Duncan's pick up, Maria Jumps as the loud report is heard from the troopers nine millimeter side arm.)

>
Duncan: (calms Maria) Don't worry about it lass, it's not in pain any more.

>
 (By strange coincidence during the long ride home, Daria ends up stuck in the middle with the stick shift between her legs and with Maria by the window who eventually falls asleep against it, and Cheyenne riding in the back with her ears flapping in the wind the whole way home. Yet regardless of how uncomfortable Daria was due to her position in the truck, little is said by anybody the entire time. The truck arrives at the pizza king back in Lawndale around ten O'clock that same evening, it had been unanimously decided that the evenings unfortunate ending would better stomached if some actual food were applied to the equation. As the truck enters the parking lot, Daria spies the Tank sitting there unoccupied)

>
Daria: Figures, NOW Jane turns up.

>
Maria: Huh,... what's up?

>
Daria: The Tank is here.

>
Duncan: (looks at Maria momentarily) That rusted out old shit box your boyfriend drives half the time? (Chuckles) It's a miracle the way they keep that thing running, the mechanic who works on it should be canonized as a saint when it dies.

>
Daria: (turns to Maria) How is it that everyone else I've met so far seems to know your brother yet strangely, I've never heard a whisper of him?

>
Maria: (shrugs) It never came up I guess, Trent's been over my house numerous times so It's not at all surprising that they've met each other.

>
Daria: Uh huh, has Jane met him too?

>
Maria: Once or twice. She rides in the car with Trent from time to time, remember? What are you jealous or something?

>
Daria: NO!

>
Duncan: Good god, does it really matter? You two could probably go on like this like a couple of banshee's all night long. There are better things to worry about than who's met the likes of me, Daria, your car is smashed, a deer had to be put down and wasted. God, what a bloody shame that was. Anyway, none of you was hurt and you got a ride home so count your blessings and let's go eat. (Opens the driver side door and gets out to head for the front door to the pizza king)

>
Daria: I guess I can't argue with logic like that.

>
Maria: Who's arguing, lets get out of the truck and catch up with him before he finds Trent and cleans the restaurant out.

>
Daria: You mean to tell me that between Trent and yourself, I actually stand a chance at getting something to eat?

>
Maria: (Climbs out of the truck and Cheyenne immediately jumps out of the back and moves to her side) You can crack all the jokes you want, I'm hungry. Cheyenne, catch up to Duncan. (The dog leads her off at a quick pace towards the restaurant Daria sighs and climbs out of the truck herself before walking after her. Once inside, Trent, Jane and the rest of the band can be immediately spotted off to the left consuming a large quantity of pizza while discussing the bands latest performance)

>
Jesse: So what good does it do if Trent goes to an open D on the down beat if your rhythm on the drums is going in the opposite direction.

>
Max: Hey what difference does it make, the crowd still loved it.

>
Trent: That's not the point, man.

>
Jane: (Cuts Trent off as Daria, Duncan, and Maria approach the table) Hey Daria, what's shaking?

>
Daria: Good to see you too, Jane. Though it would have been nicer had you at least said goodbye.

>
Jane: Hey, I left you a couple of messages saying I was going. I just figured you could use some space before we went off to college this fall.

>
Daria: (Daria thinks of the fact that she had forgotten her phone early in the day and as a result could not check her messages) I've got enough space, what I need are friends to make use of that space.

>
Jane: Okay, ...okay, I'm sorry. I assumed too much after our last argument, do you forgive me? (Waits for Daria to answer) Aw come on, Daria. Till we come to bad ends we're freakin' friends. Remember?

>
Daria: (sighs and has a seat next to Jane) Who taught you THAT defense, Jonny Cochran?

>
Jane: Actually, he stole it from ME but much to his dismay it didn't gain much sympathy from the jury during OJ's trial.

>
Daria: Even after the glove didn't fit? How could it not have?

>
Jane: (shrugs) I guess the jury was frozen at heart instead of hung like OJ wanted.

>
(Trent looks up from his food and notices Duncan and Maria)

>
Trent: Hey Maria, it's good to see you.

>
Maria: I wish I could say the same, Trent. (Trent gets up from the table and walks around to give her a hug) Hey Duncan, still in the fire biz?

>
Duncan: Oh yea, Pyro's start them and I hose em' down. It's a regular blast.

>
Maria: (while Trent's arms are still around her Maria reaches up and feels around Trent's face with her fingers until she comes across his goatee) Enough chit chat you two, now Trent I Haven't seen you all day so I need you to tell me something.

>
Trent: Really, and what's that? (Maria grabs his goatee and pulls him close the kisses him) OW!

>
Maria: Why haven't we done that sooner? (Trent blushes as she lets go)

>
Jane: (laughs) Grabbing the bull by the horns so to speak eh, Maria?

>
Maria: Just taking some friendly advice, that's all.

>
Jane: Do tell, care to enlighten me?

>
Maria: Nope, it's my ears only kind of stuff. (Jane just sits back and smirks)

>
Jane: (laughs and looks over at Trent) So much for the awkwardness, eh Trent? (After a moment) So are you people going to join us at the table like Daria or just stand there like a couple of horses all night long.

>
Duncan: Well I don't know to be honest with you, This place has a fine soft lawn out there. I may just decide to go chew a bit of it now that you mention it.

>
Jane: Hey, and maybe you could swat a few flies around your butt while your at it.

>
Duncan: You're hysterical Jane, But I can tell you this much. There'll be no insects hanging around the likes of MY arse. It just totally ruins the dining experience. (Jane bursts out laughing at his

pronunciation of the word) What? (Has a seat across from Daria)

>
Jane: (still laughing a little) Okay, that's enough body humor for one sitting. So did anything interesting happen during the course of your day, Daria?

>
Daria: Eh, nothing I'm proud of. We went to the shore, got rained on a bit, then came home. All in all a mediocre day.

>
Duncan: You make such short work of your stories lass. Your friend here is lucky to be alive, the girl nailed a deer on the way home from the shore. The car is all smashed up and everything. (Turns to Daria) You'd be better off getting another car, it would cost just as much to fix that one you had.

>
Jane: Oh god, Daria. And not a scratch on you, how lucky can you get?

>
Daria: I could have been lucky enough to take the main route home, that's how lucky I could get.

>
Jane: Oh excuses, excuses....., Duncan's right, things could be worse. Right Maria? (Looks over to see Maria snoozing on Trent's shoulder) How do you like that, she gets one kiss from my brother and she contracts his sleeping habits that quickly.

>
Daria: Guess there's no hope for those two, is there.

>
Jane: Not any more, Damn and I almost had Trent sold on the idea of going after you instead.

>
Daria: You'll never let that crush I had on him rest will you?

>
Jane: Not as long as I'm still breathing, my friend.

>
Daria: You know, That's a problem I could EASILY rectify.

>
Jane: (smirks) So you're into anal now are you? (Daria just gives her a completely disgusted look)

>
(Trent gives a yawn and Gently nudges Maria off his shoulder)

>
Trent: Hey Janie, I can feel sleep catching up to me as well so I'm going to take sleeping beauty here and cut out for the night. (Turns to Jesse and Max) You guys coming? (They all get up and Trent moves to Wake Maria up)

>
Jane: Oh let her be, Trent. Be a gentleman and carry her to the car.

>
Trent: Nah, I'm afraid I might hurt my back or something.

>
Jane: Yea, that lack of movement thing during your long hours of sleep has probably atrophied your muscles. I'm surprised you can move at all.

>
Daria: And besides, people might get the wrong impression and think he was getting ready to stuff a body into the back of the van. We don't need the cops showing up and beating the living hell out of him.

>
Jane: Or maybe we do, it'd make for some great sketches. What do you say Trent?

>
Trent: (just smiles and wakes Maria up) Time to go, love. (She groans and eventually climbs to her feet and Then Trent leads her towards the door with the rest of the band and the dog following close behind)

>
Duncan: (calls after Trent) Keep your eyes peeled for any deer ye' daft bastard, the Damned things are suicidal tonight. (Trent and the others just keep walking)

>
Jane: Well so much for the opportunity of good art presenting

itself. (Looks at the table and notices that there is only one slice left) But as long as you guys haven't eaten yet, I might as well go order another pie. I'll be right back. (Jane gets up and heads up to the counter)

>
Duncan: Is it me or is it rather odd how everybody just up and disappeared at the same time like that?

>
Daria: You noticed that little coincidence too, huh?

>
Duncan: Aye, I did.

>
Daria: Um...listen, I didn't say anything earlier so I might as well just get it out of my system before I forget and give the false impression that I'm ungrateful or something.

>
Duncan: You're welcome. And sorry about acting like a bloody jock back there, I just hate to see things wasted. Even if it's by accident.

>
Daria: Apology accepted. (After about ten minutes of silence Daria Looks around) Where's Jane with that Damned pizza?

>
Duncan: Probably eating it at the counter, but since we're still waiting do you want that last slice?

>
Daria: Um...no, that's okay you can have it.

>
Duncan: Actually, I was offering it. Take the thing I can wait.

>
Daria: No, It's alright. (Thinks for a moment and then decides to take the slice anyway just as Duncan is reaching for it himself and they end up grabbing each others hand by mistake and then withdrawing their hands in embarrassment) Sorry about that, I just thought you weren't going to take it and like you said about wasting things and all.

>
Duncan: Aye, I thought the same. Tell you what, I'm going to go see what's keeping the food. You eat the last of that. (He gets up and walks up to the counter to meet up with Jane. Daria picks up the last slice with both hands and is about to eat it when she stops and reaches around to feel the back of her neck to notice that the hairs are standing on end)

>
Daria: (confused) It's not even cold in here.

>
(Cut to later that night Daria is seen at her doorstep as Duncan and Jane pull away in his truck after dropping her off for the night)

>
Daria: (places her keys in the lock and prepares to open the door) Great, now that I'm home how the hell am I going to explain that my car is smashed without my parents acting like a couple of nutcase's? (Daria opens the door and walks in to see Helen and Jake sleeping on the couch in the buff with only a blanket wrapped around the two of them to grant any dignity) Oh the hell with explanations, where's the damned camera?

>
~The end~

>
Footnotes....

>
1. In reference to "All Good Things" Nick is mentioned as being the angel of Fate.

>
2. In reference to both "A New Experience" and "All Good Things" Paul is known as being the angel of death.

4. Shadowed Wings

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV and Viacom productions

>
In order to gain at least some sort of understanding of the continuing story line of this series, it would be helpful to read the

stories that preceded this one in order.

>
1. A New Experience

>2. All Good Things
3. Issues

>4. Shadowed Wings
.

>.
.

># Season's End

>

> Shadowed Wings
 Written by

> Wildgoose

>
 The sun had long since set for that day, the stars had appeared as they always had, and life continued to march forward regardless of anyone or anything that stood in it's way. And despite all this, Daria lie on her back in bed late that night staring up at the ceiling and counting the cracks in the ceiling as she had done on so many occasions before, though never quite for this reason. She had counted over a thousand of those tiny little cracks in her ceiling, the same number as there always had been and for some reason she never found any new ones. "A comfort" Daria thought to herself, at least this was a sign that all the critical members in the ceiling were acting as they should and there was no reason to worry about wether or not the ceiling would come crashing down on her as she slept, "If I could get to sleep" Daria mumbled to herself just to break the dead silence that filled the room like a thick cloud. Helen And Jake had long since gone to bed having said their goodnights to Daria and once in their rooms having done the deed as Daria could tell by the various ungodly sounds that could be heard down the hall coming from their room. "I'll bet that's what's keeping me awake" Daria thought, " My subconscious is scared that the thought of what my parents might have been doing would provoke a nightmare so horrible it would be sure to stop my heart in my sleep. Leave it to your parents to indulge themselves at the absolute worst time imaginable"

> Daria turned over on her side in an effort to get comfortable and closed her eyes hoping that sleep would come eventually, but she found no such luck. Even the sound of her own breathing was keeping her awake. " I don't believe this" Daria thought, "I've never had insomnia this bad before." Daria sat upright in her bed and looked about her room, There was a dim white glow emanating from the edges of the window shade where it failed to completely cover the window, an obvious result of the full moon that was out tonight. After staring at this minute amount of light coming from the window Daria reached over to the opposite side of her bed and flicked on the lamp next to her bed which immediately bathed the room in a hard white light because there hadn't been a shade to cover that lamp with since the move to Lawndale. No doubt the movers found it far too enchanting an item to let slip through their fingers and decided to keep it for themselves, possibly as the object on which they could focus their affection. Daria smiled briefly at the concept of a bunch of brainless idiots forming a cult who's purpose in life was to worship a lampshade.
 Looking about her room now as she squinted in the bright light, Daria got up and walked over to the bookshelf on the far side of the room. It was quite a selection of noted authors she had, Hawthorne, Poe, Whitman, just to name a few. But all of these she had read countless times and could knowingly quote several passages from each book. As a result Daria dismissed the idea of re-reading any of them even for the sake of attempting to tire herself out. Daria walked back over to her bed, picked up the remote, and flicked on the TV. Daria flicked through every channel available on her little thirteen inch tv set at least three times just in case by some strange coincidence she happened to miss something

interesting, she couldn't forgive herself if she accidentally missed some poor soul getting his head ripped off by a deranged axe murderer. "It's all crap" Daria said out loud and turned the tv off just before she tossed the remote back onto the night stand. Daria paused for a moment to notice a familiar sensation within her own body and a moment later left her room and went down the hallway to use the bathroom. About five minutes later Daria returned to her room and spent several moments debating if she should give Jane a call and deprive her of sleep as well. "They say misery loves company, why should I be the only one to suffer tonight". And at that she picked up the phone on the night stand and dialed Jane's number and let it ring for the longest time. (Cut to Jane's house) (Jane is seen sleeping at an odd angle on her bed with one arm draped off the edge and the pillow covering her head. Cutting to Trent's room he is sleeping on the floor having long since rolled off the bed while turning in his sleep. Despite the persistent ringing of the phone, both of the Lane's are far too dead to the world to hear the phone to say nothing about actually managing some sort of bodily movement that would enable either one of them to pick it up. Cut back to Daria who finally gives up on her friend and hangs up the phone) "Dammit" Daria turns curiously to notice a strangely soft warm breeze of summer air circulating through the room. Daria paused perplexed as she saw the window shade swaying ever so slightly in the breeze. She walked towards the window and lifted the shade and was amazed at the fact that her bedroom window was open halfway. "I must be losing it, I don't remember leaving that window open" she said as she closed the window and lowered the shade for a moment only to lift it again and stare out the bedroom window towards the driveway setting her eyes upon her ninety nine cavalier which she had only recently purchased as a replacement for her now defunct escort.

>Daria stood deep in thought for several moments debating how best to pass the time until her old friend sleep finally showed up. "The hell with it" Daria said, "It beats tossing about my room all night waiting for sleep that won't come."
 Daria threw on her shirt as well as her jacket out of pure habit followed by her boots and then grabbed her keys off the night stand and quietly padded downstairs leaving a brief note for her mother stating that she had left the house "early" as a precautionary measure so Helen wouldn't search the earth for her if she happened to wake up in the middle of the night. After doing this she went out the door to her car and left the driveway on a midnight drive. She drove around town for about an hour adding to the twenty some thousand miles that were already on the car when she had bought it. She had been up and down every street in Lawndale that was familiar to her, she even drove past the high school which she had sworn to herself that she would never go near again after her graduation even if the fate of the world somehow depended on it. Yet for some reason she still did not feel tired even though simply watching the dotted lines on the road has been known to cause people to nod off. Daria turned down Newbold's corner road since this was one of the few roads left she had yet to venture down this night, and after a moment Daria happened to see a truck parking in front of Maria's house as she was preparing to pass it. Daria slowed the vehicle and pulled alongside the truck slowly to notice that it was Duncan who in turn had seen her headlights behind him and turned to notice her, or at least her car.

>
Duncan: (Approached Daria's car cautiously as she rolled down the window) Is there something I can help you with? (Once close enough to see Daria's face) Oh it's you, good lord lass. I thought I was about to become the victim of a drive by or something.

>
Daria: No such luck I'm afraid, I left the Uzi at home and the rest of my gang is out vandalizing street signs or something.

>
Duncan: (snaps his fingers) Dammit, just when you think things are about to get interesting for once.

>
Daria: Sorry to put a damper on your evening.

>
Duncan: Eh, stuff happens. (Looks at the time on his pager) But speaking of evenings, or even times much later. What are you doing up this late, it's three in the morning?

>
Daria: I think a gremlin snuck into my room and sabotaged my sleeping habits, I can't get to sleep tonight.

>
Duncan: (Smirks) So you decided to wander aimlessly in the night. Was this a last resort?

>
Daria: Pretty much, I've read all the books in my room more times than I want to count and there's absolutely nothing on tv. So it was either go for a drive or sit in my room and watch myself go slowly insane from having nothing to do all night long.

>
Duncan: So the choice was obvious then,... Good call. (Waves his hand back and forth a few times in front of his face) Well this is fun and all, but if you want to chat and pass the time then why don't you park you're car and kill the engine, you're exhaust is giving me a headache.

>
Daria: This from a person who makes his living running into burning buildings and breathing smoke all day long.

>
Duncan: Well, everybody's got to have a hobby. But that carbon monoxide, it's murder on the sinuses.

>
Daria: (smirks) Oh very well, I suppose you may have a point.

>
Duncan: Wonderful, I guess that's something in my favor then.

>
Daria: Careful, don't let you're point go to you're head.

>
Duncan: Too late, it's been there and back already. (Daria cocks an eyebrow at this and then pulls her car up against the curb in front of Duncan's truck and gets out after shutting the engine off. Duncan's eyes widen briefly and then return to normal before Daria is close enough to notice) Warm tonight huh?

>
Daria: (looks at him oddly) Uh,yea I guess.

>
Duncan: (looks her over quickly) Come on, we can chat inside. You want something to drink?

>
Daria: Um...no, I'm okay.

>
Duncan: Suit yourself. (Once inside the house) Are you sure I can't get you anything, a drink, something to eat,.....a pair of pants maybe?

>
Daria: (scowls) Excuse me? (Duncan turns on a light and motions for her to turn and face a mirror that's hanging on a nearby wall. Daria does so and her face quickly pales and then turns a bright red) Oh please god let this be some horribly demented nightmare. (Duncan walks over and pinches her) OW!!

>
Duncan: No can do lass, you're wide awake and strolling around in your boxers. I have to admit though, they go well with the jacket.

>
Daria: (Scowls) Do you ALWAYS manage to find a way to be a complete jerk?

>
Duncan: Jerk? (Leans up against the wall) You know,.... you're not the FIRST person to be paid a visit by the fuck-up fairy . Or is this something common for you?

>
Daria: NO, but you could have used a little more tact you know.

>
Duncan: Tact huh? I didn't mean to be rude or anything but you showed up at my door in the middle of the night only half dressed. Knowing some of the people you went to school with they probably would have let you humiliate yourself. At least I brought you inside, what did you want me to do stand there and guess the color of your underwear?

>
Daria: No, I.....

>
Duncan: Okay, blue. Are you happy now?

>
Daria: (scowls in a combination of anger and embarrassment)

LOOK,I just did something that you would normally expect from somebody who hasn't seen their marbles in half a lifetime, okay? I'm embarrassed, a little humiliated.....

>
Duncan: Take it easy lass, you act as if doing something without thinking is a first for you?

>
Daria: NO!! I'm only human, and I make mistakes like everybody else. But at the moment I'm trying to deal with the fact that I just drove around the neighborhood and am now standing in front of my friends brother without wearing pants....

>
Duncan: (chimes in) And you've got nice legs to boot....

>
Daria: (Stops mid sentence and blushes) Excuse me....?

>
Duncan: Oh bloody hell, must be my lack of sleep talking there. But it could have been worse you know, you could have been wearing a pair with little hearts on it or some cutesy item like that.

>
Daria: (chuckles) Oh please kill me if I ever wear anything like that.

>
Duncan: Is that a modeling invitation?

>
Daria: NO!! Look, I'm feeling extremely awkward here can you.....

>
Duncan: (Snaps his fingers and then reaches behind a nearby sofa and pulls out a throw blanket and tosses it to Daria) It was wondering if you'd ask, ...catch.

>
Daria: (Catches it and then wraps it about her waist)

Um.....thanks

>
Duncan: There is one up side to this little malady you know.

>
Daria: An upside to the most embarrassing moment in my life, does it involve a guillotine?.

>
Duncan: Unfortunately no, but I think I DO have an old battle axe lying around here that you could be beheaded with. But you don't always have to take the easy way out you know.

>
Daria: Perhaps not, and under the circumstances I'm not about to go running out the door any time soon so you have a captive audience, enlighten me already.

>
Duncan: It's not much really, I'm just not exactly known for spreading information about so unless you talk yourself, no one will ever know about this. (Thinks for a moment) Other people have done worse you know.

>
Daria: (lifts an eyebrow) You must be joking.

>
Duncan: Nope, take the call I was coming back from tonight for instance. This woman's house went up because she left the grate open on the fire place after getting one going all because she was too busy getting some from a guy behind her husbands back

>
Daria: (smirks) I guess she wanted to be thorough about destroying any incriminating evidence.

>
Duncan: (begins ad-libbing to the animaniacs theme) Because we're pyro-maniacs, we set our lighters to the max.....

>
Daria: (just stares at him as if his head had just rolled off

his shoulders and onto the floor) Oh yea, you're gone alright.

>
Duncan: Well in that case leave a message and I'll get back to you when I'm done hiding the ashes from my victims.

>
Daria: (shakes her head) You are a very demented individual, just so you know that.

>
Duncan: Aye, and it's probably one of my more endearing qualities too. (Daria laughs a little) Anyway getting back to the story at hand, the house is going up like roman candle and here she is standing out side wearing only what she had on during her little escapade.

>
Daria: Do I even want to know?

>
Duncan: Just this little thong thingy, you could see everything for gods sake, and she was none the worse for it. Acted like there wasn't a thing wrong with the picture.

>
Daria: Yea, but I'm guessing that she didn't have time to throw anything on. My dad almost burnt the kitchen down a while back and I barely had time to grab anything before being shoved out the door.

>
Duncan: That's what I thought too, but I asked if she wanted a long coat to wear and she just said "no, it's not cold enough out." Eventually the cops noticed and took her away for indecent exposure.

>
Daria: Okayum, How does this in any way relate to me?

>
Duncan: At least you realized the situation before making a spectacle of yourself, this woman was so unnerved she didn't even notice what she wasn't wearing and as a result everybody got to look. Imagine how she'll feel when she comes to her senses. There's that and you're wearing much more than she was.

>
Daria: (yawns) Ok, somaybe it's not as humiliating as I made it out to be, but it's still embarrassing..

>
Duncan: Insomnia wearing off?

>
Daria: It's kept me up this long, I doubt it's going to take a leave of absence any time soon.

>
Duncan: That's good, I was afraid I was going to have to tuck you in or something.

>
Daria: (looks at him crossly) Don't even think about getting any ideas. These boots are steel toed and all I need is one good shot.

>
Duncan: (cringes) Cripes, I was only trying to crack a joke love. You needn't get all violent on me, it makes me think of that high school science teacher Maria was telling me about. What was her name,the man hater.

>
Daria: Ms. Barch.

>
Duncan: Aye, that's her. By the sound of it I think she may have been a praying mantis in a past life or something. You'd think she would have come back as something better.

>
Daria: I guess she just couldn't ditch that natural urge to make dinner out of the opposite sex.

>
Duncan: (shivers) Gives me nightmares that woman does. Anyway, where was I.....oh yea, don't worry about it, there are women out there who walk to the grocery store in the dead of night wearing only a bathrobe.. Besides there's bound to be more embarrassing stuff to come you're way as life goes on.

>
Daria: Gee, thanks for the vote of confidence.

>
Duncan: Anytime. And since you're decent at the moment with a blanket over you're lap, I'm going to make some tea. Want some?

>
Daria:(yawns) Why not.

>
Duncan: Right then, I'll be a moment.(he begins to walk towards the kitchen)

>
Daria: (calls after him) White.

>
Duncan: (stops in his tracks while flashing Daria a bewildered look) What?

>
Daria: You guessed wrong.

>
Duncan: (blushes heavily and laughs nervously) I didn't expect you to answer,.... like I said I was just trying to break the ice a little.

>
Daria: I just wanted to make sure I wasn't the only one drowning in embarrassment, so I figured I might as well take you down with me.

>
Duncan: (smiles) I'll let you know when I go under for the third and final time then. (Turns and continues into the kitchen)

>
Daria: (rests her head against the back of the couch) Oh god, I always thought the awkward moments would end with high school and puberty. (Closes her eyes for a moment) Dumb.....

>
Duncan: (comes back into the room about ten minutes later with two cups of tea in hand only to see Daria has fallen asleep) Hey Daria,.....ah hell. (Smiles) It looks like I get to tuck you in after all. (He puts the tea down on an end table, coaches Daria to lie down on the couch and puts her feet up, then gently covers her with the blanket she had around herself.) Bloody shame I don't have a camera. (Duncan picks up the teas from the end table and walks back into the kitchen)

>
(Cut to late the next morning)

>
(The house is quiet, and no one else in the house appears to be up yet. Daria is woken from her slumber by a warm breeze blowing through a halfway opened window right next to the front door. Daria stumbles off the couch in a sleepy daze mumbling to herself as she slowly pads to the window seemingly unaware that she is not in her own room.)

>
Daria: (Barely awake) Dammit, who keeps leaving this window open? (As she shuts it the doorbell rings waking Daria from the remainder of her half consciousness) AHHH..... What the hell? (Daria instinctively and without any thought at all opens the front door to come face to face with Jane)

>
Jane: (turns from watching a couple of squirrels going at it over a couple of nuts on the nearby lawn) Hey Duncan, You've got to check this.....DARIA!!?

>
Daria: (noticing that she is not wearing her glasses, she squints to get a better look at the person at the door) Jane?

>
Jane: What are YOU doing here? (Looks Daria over to notice she's lacking her skirt) And boy can I not wait to hear THIS!!!

>
The End

>
(Feedback or suggestions may be directed to wildgoose81@hotmail.com)

5. Burnt Out

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV and Viacom productions.

>
This story is the fifth in the unseen phenomena series, to understand the plot line it is recommended that the reader at least read the first two stories.

>
1. A New Experience 4. Shadowed Wings #

>2. All Good Things 5. Burnt Out # Season's End
3. Issues

#.....

>
 Burnt Out

> By
 Wildgoose

>

>
 Daria watched from the safety of the truck as a nearby house on the far side of Lawndale was in the process of going up like a torch. She was still trying to fathom why she had chosen to ride with Duncan instead of either walking home from where they were at the time or just catching the bus. Granted, she wasn't really in the mood to ride on a public bus with a whole bunch of smelly stressed out people who are just coming home from work. That's all she needed was for just one person to bend just a little bit to far and decide to take it out on everyone else on the bus. Not to mention the fact that it was bitterly cold out, but she had been smart enough to dress for the weather. The conditions on a public bus were most likely the deciding factor in her decision though, that and watching a house fire wasn't exactly the most uninteresting thing she could have done with her evening. Daria leaned her head against the window and watched as sparks flew high into the air, no doubt Jane would have found this an extremely inspiring event from which she could create her next masterpiece. Which brought Daria to notice something familiar about Duncan, he liked to take pictures of people amidst disaster. In more ways than Daria could count, that reminded her of Jane and how she liked to photograph the sick, sad, and decrepit nature of people's lives when they weren't looking, all for the sake of her artwork and the twisted genius it so often represented.

> At that Daria decided to look for Duncan's thirty five millimeter camera that he so often kept behind the seat in his truck, "No point in missing the chance to capture someone's misery on film for all time" she thought. Sure enough it was there and after closer examination she noticed that it was loaded as well. "Ready at a moments notice" Daria said to herself as she prepared the camera for action and began to snap off frame after frame hoping that the rolled up window wouldn't produce a glare that would show up when and if the film was ever developed. "It's just too cold out to keep the window down" she thought, "even to help somebody in their hobby". On the nearby grass and in the street as well, Daria could see those who had been put out by this unfortunate event and also she could see all those who had come to watch the destruction of someone's home simply because they had nothing more interesting to do. Steam rose from their mouths as they conversed with each other, fretted over the loss of a home, or simply blew into their hands in an attempt to keep themselves warm.
 At the thought of warmth, Daria reached over and turned the keys in the ignition to start the truck up and as soon as the engine came to life, so did the blue light bar on the roof. Daria felt her heart leap as if she had done something horribly wrong to alert everyone to her presence but quickly calmed herself after noticing that her actions were almost unnoticeable when taken into account with the lights coming from the countless emergency vehicles nearby. Daria sighed and then flipped the switch to turn the heat on. Fortunately Duncan had deliberately left the keys in the truck specifically so that Daria would be able to make use of the heater. A rather courteous gesture considering how long she was likely to be waiting in the truck. As she watched the people walk about, Daria thought back to when her father had almost burned out his own family. The image of herself standing outside in her bedclothes along with the rest of the family was crisp in her mind as if it had just happened yesterday. "I'm just glad I'M not the one stuck out there this time" She said to herself. Although the kitchen fire in her own

home never became as extensive and out of control as this blaze, none the less the week that she was forced to spend in close quarters with her sister allowed for a sufficient amount of sympathy to emerge from deep within.

> Daria held the camera up to eye level and snapped the last picture on the roll and let out a yawn as the camera kicked in the auto rewind and continued to whir until it had finished it's task and prepared itself to receive a fresh new roll of film. The target of her final photo was an unsuspecting group of teenagers attempting to make the most of the circumstances by placing marshmallows onto the ends of some long thin wooden poles and attempting to get close enough to the heat to roast them. Daria later on that night laughed to herself before yawning again as she thought of how many times the dimwits had failed in their attempts having been confronted by the police and eventually were arrested for disorderly conduct. Daria put the camera back behind the seat and rested her head against the window as she could feel the need for some sleep creeping up on her either from sitting in the truck for so long or possibly because it actually was late and past her normal bedtime. She couldn't tell for sure which it was given that she had neglected to wear a watch when she left the house that evening, but it was hardly a matter of consequence. She now had an apartment of her own to live in while she attended college and as a result no longer needed to report back to commandant Helen of Stalag Morgendorffer. Daria couldn't help but smile at this analogy as that was what it had seemed like for so long until she left home in search of an education. She stared out the window at the orange glow that emanated from the inferno that was once known as home to someone,... somewhere and eventually unknowingly closed her eyes and fell asleep.
 Daria drifted in and out of sleep and shifted positions several times in discomfort as she was strangely still vaguely aware of herself at some points in her sleep. Daria opened her eyes slightly at one point in effort to determine if she was actually awake or not. She was aware of herself, yet strangely everything about her seemed like a dream. Her eyes were blurry, but that was likely due to the fact that she had just woke up, if indeed she actually was awake. Daria lifted her head slightly to look out the window and noticed that it had begun to snow at a moderate pace adding a somewhat graceful and actually beautiful hue to the forked fingers of fire that still rose from the house.. "Wonderful" she thought, "knowing my luck I'll get snowed in while waiting in this truck,...god I hope this thing has four wheel drive." Daria squinted as she noticed the figure of what seemed like a nearby person in the steady falling snow. She had thought it might have been Duncan returning to the truck either to warm himself or god willing to get them both the hell out of there, but at closer examination she realized that this person was standing still. Daria pressed her face against the glass in an attempt to make out who the person was and why he or she was standing out in the freezing cold as if it was no bother at all. Daria could make out a long cobalt blue over coat that came clear down to the persons ankles, and it wasn't even buttoned closed. The lower end of the coat swayed off to the left indicating which way the wind was blowing. To Daria's surprise the person casually took several steps closer to the truck to the point where there was enough ambient light to make an identification. "No, ...I've GOT to be hallucinating or something" Daria said as she laid her eyes upon an all to familiar outfit that was visible where the coat hung open, the pink baby tee, the form fitting blue jeans, to say nothing about the seemingly bouncy red hair, without a doubt this was Quinn.

> Daria rubbed her eyes in disbelief hoping that the person before

her eyes was actually some sort of illusion caused by either fatigue, or all the flashing lights from the fire trucks, something in her eye, or maybe all of the above. But after several rubs and cleaning her glasses with her sleeve, Daria took yet another look to see that Quinn was in fact still there. "You're dead...." Daria stuttered in a continued state of disbelief, and to her amazement there came a crystal clear reply as if they were standing right next to each other and there was no glass or even the frame of a truck between them. "Duh...." Quinn replied, "But contrary to popular belief it actually never seems to stop anybody." Daria's only reply was "Um.....". Despite Daria's rare loss for words Quinn continued to converse like her once typical....living self. "I hope you don't mind that I stopped to talk, I was in the area anyway and, ...you know, family and stuff." Daria calmed herself and decided that if she were going to have some sort of demented nightmare or even a psycho-tropic hallucination caused by bad pizza she might as well go with the flow instead of getting worked up over the whole deal. "I never thought you'd be caught dea...um, ...wearing a coat like that" Daria said resuming her well known stoic tone of voice. Quinn chimed in almost immediately as if they had actually gotten along in life. "I KNOW, when I first saw it I thought it would just look SO bulky. But once I tried it on it just seemed to go with everything so WELL. I didn't have to accessorize or anything, can you imagine it?" "I try not to,... thinking of fashion makes me feel as if that rash is just itching to break out again" was Daria's dry reply, "So what REALLY brought you here?" Quinn looked slightly amused as she stuck her hands in her coat pockets "Just thought I'd say Hi,oh and to ask you a favor. Can you keep an eye on you're friend? He's sort of key to you, and walking head on into a wall of fire doesn't seem to be enough to convince him to be a little more careful"
 Daria is about to reply when a loud knock is heard at the driver side window behind her, she spins around in her seat to be hit by a cold blast of air as Duncan opens the driver side door and climbs in. "Bloody hell, it's cold out there." He hands Daria one of two tupperware containers of hot soup and shivers heavily before opening his container. "Eat up lass, the lunch truck is pulling out so there won't be any more of it." Daria ignores his comment and turns her attention back to her own window to discover that Quinn had vanished as if she had never been there in the first place. A look of concern came over Duncan's face as Daria turned away from him, "Is everything all right lassie, you look as if you'd seen a ghost or something?" Daria snapped out of her daze and quickly replied with a slight degree of tension in her voice. "Um....no,I'm okay. I just hadn't completely woken up yet I guess." Duncan looked at her with a puzzled look for several moments before the two of them finally began to consume the now cooling soup. Daria decided to break the momentary silence by attempting a conversation. "So what's going on" Daria quipped, Duncan replied as if it were simply the next order of business in the average day. "We're set here, it's all under control now so the career guys are going to stay and finish the job. Our gear is all stowed in the trucks which are pulling out as we speak, so as soon as we're done eating we can call it a night" Duncan reaches over to the dash board and flips a switch turning the light bar off. "Must have left that on, I hope it didn't keep you up" he said with a somewhat apologetic tone of voice. "Um.....No, I'm alright" she said as she looked forward through the front windshield at the snow that had accumulated on the hood. Duncan took it upon himself to look in the same direction to admire the view. "For the life of me I can't figure out where all this came from, the last I checked the weather people had been calling for clear sky's tonight. (Beat) Huh, ...freak of

nature I guess." Daria turned to stare out her passenger window still trying to figure out if what had transpired was actually a dream. "Or something" she muttered as her breath condensed on the window. Duncan gave an odd look towards her and then since the truck was already running, he put it in gear and they left the scene.

> They weren't on the road long before Duncan himself attempted to strike up a conversation, Daria wasn't sure at first whether it was just for the sake of keeping himself awake or if he actually wanted to talk. He wasn't usually one for talking while he was driving, in fact he could get almost annoyingly quiet at times while driving. "I ran into Jane down at the station yesterday" he said. Daria smirked at him, "into but not over, ..huh?" Duncan let out a short laugh and then replied "the thought did occur to me but I honestly think the girl could have outrun the truck for a short distance. So I opted to talk with her instead, being as the station was a bit out of the way from the pizza king or your house. I figured she must have come down for something." Daria leaned back in her seat and raised an eyebrow in curiosity waiting for Duncan to continue with his semi detailed account of the encounter with her friend. "So what did she want already" Daria said expecting the topic of their conversation to be something irrelevant or even just casual chat. Usually when Jane dropped by unexpectedly on someone like that it was either to invite the person to watch her brothers band perform at the Zen or because she had a personal interest in the person. As Daria thought about it further, she figured on Jane having a personal interest. " She invited me to come down to the Zen and watch Trent and the others" "Bingo" Daria thought, As impossible as it may seem. There are times when Jane Lane could actually be extremely predictable. Duncan continued with his reply " And then she asked if you and I were getting together." "Damn you, Jane" Daria said as she furled her brows together. "She's always trying to play matchmaker with me, she tried to get Trent and I together for the longest time." Duncan turned his attention away from the road briefly to look at her before looking back at the road. "Yea, she told me. But for some reason or another the fact that you and I have been hanging out together lately would be the most likely cause for her rather interesting Question." Daria frowned and continued to look forward through the windshield, "And you told her what?" Duncan let out a loud rolling laugh at Daria's inquiry, "What did you want me to tell her? I told her the truth, she's been busy with art school and since you two aren't able to get together as often as you used to you've gotten bored and were looking for someone to hangout with. (Beat) Why were you looking for something more?" Daria quickly spun her head in his direction and replied with a slight degree of defensive hostility, "No." Duncan reacted in surprise at the forcefulness of her reply and let out a sigh as he turned the corner on the street Daria was now living on. Daria stared at him at least in some way wishing she hadn't quite replied in that fashion. "I didn't mean it like that, I'm just tired of Jane trying to set me up all the time." Duncan continued to look ahead at the road as he pulled up in front of the apartment complex. "Understandable.But anyway, getting back to Jane. Give her a call when you get up, she sounded like she missed you." Daria smirked, "Yea, good friends are sort of hard to find these days." Duncan turned to look at her as she moved to exit the truck, "Aye." With that Daria left the truck and started down the short walk to the front doors of the complex, after she got approximately halfway down the walk she began to toss about her mind the possible devious tactics that Jane may attempt to use in the future as part of her infernal matchmaking lifestyle. Daria stopped in her tracks and for some reason she couldn't fathom at the moment, she turned to look

back at the truck as Duncan pulled away and didn't continue on to her place until he had disappeared from view.

>
The End.....

>
Feedback is always appreciated, any comments or suggestions may be directed to wildgoose81@hotmail.com

> <p><p>

6. By the Twilight

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV

>
Note: The next in the Unseen Phenomena Series. (AKA the UPS series) This story takes place approximately six months after "Burnt Out"

>

> By the Twilight
 By

> Wildgoose

>
(The scene opens on the inside of a dark apartment one Saturday afternoon. The shades are drawn, none of the lights are turned on, and the only ambient noise is the hum of the refrigerator in the kitchen. That soothing quiet is soon disturbed by what sounds like the pounding of someone's fist on the front door. The pounding comes in a series of three's, with absolutely no result until the eighth set when someone finally stirs from the bedroom at the far side of the apartment. The person stumbles in attempt to place a pair of glasses on her face just before opening the door.)

>
Daria: (opens the front door and squints until her eyes come into focus upon the frame of a dark haired woman wearing a t-shirt and a pair of jogging shorts.) Somebody had better be dead.....

>
Jane: Well no, not yet. But I can correct that if you like, I think I saw the mail man somewhere around the corner. He should make an easy enough target, I think.

>
Daria: Oh, it's just you. And here I was ready to fend off a homicidal maniac.

>
Jane: (smirks) Sorry to disappoint you there, friend.

>
Daria: No problem, it's just as well anyway. (Daria steps aside to allow Jane to walk into the apartment) So what brings you to my extremely humble abode?

>
Jane: Nothing really, it's just that since you got this place last fall you haven't once invited me over to show it off.

>
Daria: (Walks into the kitchen with Jane close behind and begins to brew a pot of coffee) What's to show off? This is the kitchen, you've already walked through the living room and my bed room is around the corner there.

>
Jane: (turns to look about the apartment) Oh come on, Daria. You make this place sound so small, for an apartment it's actually kind of spacious if you ask me.

>
Daria: No one did, but thanks just the same.

>
Jane: Anytime. So when's the house warming party?

>
Daria: (looks confused) Jane, it's July. I've been here since I started college last fall, it's getting a bit late for any kind of house warming party isn't it?

>
Jane: Hey, it's never too late to have a party where only the people you like will actually show up.

>
Daria: So you're looking forward to a two person house warming party are you?

>
Jane: Hmm...I guess it would be rather small at that wouldn't it. Oh well, it was a thought at least.

>
Daria: (Has a seat at the kitchen table) Yea,... so what's new? How's art college?

>
Jane: School is decent, I did well last semester. There was this one professor who was pretty cool, he never bothered with any self congratulatory yap about his own accomplishments as an artist. He seemed to be genuinely interested in what we were working on, and what we hoped to get out of the course.

>
Daria: A teacher who gives a damn, now there's a first.

>
Jane: Yea, tell me about it. And as for what's new,.....Trent got a job.

>
Daria: (does a double take) Huh,whoa,what?????

>
Jane: (laughs) Now that'll wake you up in the morning, huh?

>
Daria: (rubs her neck with her hand) Yea, and I think I pulled a muscle in the process. (Pauses for a second) I must be hearing things, I thought for a moment that you said Trent got a job.

>
Jane: No, you heard correctly. Trent,my older sibling, the person everyone thought would sleep his life away has actually moved his ass into gear and got himself a job. And not a crappy burger joint job mind you, a decent one.

>
Daria: (faux panic) Oh my god, this is one of the seven signs of the apocalypse isn't it? How many are left until prophesy is fulfilled?

>
Jane: We should be so lucky. But believe it or not, he actually got a career minded job.

>
Daria: So don't keep me on the edge of my heavy eyelids here, Jane. What has the boy chosen to do with his life?

>
Jane: He's working in the sound booth at a recording studio just outside of town.

>
Daria: (opens her eyes wide) A professional recording studio actually hired your narcoleptic brother?

>
Jane : Well semi professional anyway. It's one of those places geared up to allow the underdogs a chance to record their stuff. Thirty bucks an hour for studio time, not to bad as I understand it. And since Trent works there now, he and the band get to use the studio a couple of hours each weekend for free.

>
Daria: Aha, so he hasn't given up on the band after all.

>
Jane: (smirks) Oh hell no, that's still his dream. But it wasn't his motivating force.

>
Daria: So what did it take to get your brother out of bed and into the work force?

>
Jane: That's the best part, ...get this. He wanted to show Maria that he can be responsible and actually set some goals in life.

>
Daria: (displays a look of serious disbelief) Oh god, they're really starting to get serious aren't they? Trent didn't try to pop the question or something did he?

>
Jane: (bursts out laughing) I seriously doubt that, neither one of them is in any way prepared for such a leap.

>
Daria: (sighs) Thank god, I thought I felt a heart attack coming on.

>
Jane: Why Daria, are you still holding on to that old crush of yours?

>
Daria: (scowls) Has hell frozen over yet? Get over it, Jane.

You're scheming backfired years ago. Trent has hooked up with the scot and there's nothing you can do about it.

>
Jane: The times will change, crushes will fade, but sarcasm will survive, eh Daria?

>
Daria: You should stick that on a movie poster somewhere.

>
Jane: I'll give it some thought.

>
Daria: (rubs her eyes and takes a sip of her coffee) So is Trent at work today or what?

>
Jane: Take a look at your calendar and then ask me that.

>
Daria: (frowns and walks over to the refrigerator to look at the calendar on the door) It's July fourth,oh I guess he wouldn't be, would he.

>
Jane: Nope, and that brings me to another question. What are you doing today?

>
Daria: Oh wait, that was one of the questions on "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" last night too.

>
Jane: So what was the answer?

>
Daria: I don't know, I hate that show so I turned it off.

>
Jane: (laughs) And you wonder why your not rolling in money yet.

>
Daria: I already know why,... since I moved out I don't have as many chances to extort money out of my parents as I used to.

>
Jane: Oh well, the money well was bound to dry up sooner or later.

>
Daria: Yea, I guess so.

>
Jane: So anyway, like I was saying. What are you doing today?

>
Daria: Well I WAS planning to sleep the day away, but that evil plot was foiled when somebody came pounding on my front door.

>
Jane: Just call me the anti-sandman. So what's the deal already?

>
Daria: I was serious, there is no deal. I planned to enjoy the holiday by sleeping it away and wake up sometime tomorrow when everyone has ceased playing with explosives.

>
Jane: Oh Daria, since when are you one to pass up watching some dumb ass blowing his own hand off just for the sake of a two hundred year old holiday.

>
Daria: Oh when you put it like that I can only wonder what I was thinking when I was in dreamland.

>
Jane: Yea, me too. So it's the fourth of July and you Daria Morgendorffer have absolutely nothing to do.

>
Daria; Yea, hence the term "summer vacation". It means that for the entire length of the summer solstice one does as little as possible until the vacation ends.

>
Jane: Oh come Daria, you can't stay holed up in your apartment for the whole summer. It's the fourth of July and there is a fireworks display going off tonight. Do you really want to miss the chance to see a bunch of explosives handlers blow themselves up? (Daria smirks) Yea, I knew you'd like that idea. You never could pass up watching bedlam and mayhem unfold themselves into a full fledged disaster.

>
Daria: Okay, I admit it. Are you happy now?

>
Jane: Not yet I'm not. Maria and I are going to the fireworks display tonight and we intend to drag you along with us.

>
Daria: You're going with Maria? How are you going to pry her away from Trent?

>
Jane: Oh that shouldn't be a problem, The Tank is busted and Trent along with the rest of the band are going to spend the next couple of days ripping the thing apart in a futile attempt to repair the un-repairable.

>
Daria: (chuckles) How un-repairable are we talking here?

>
Jane: Are you kidding, the tank threw a rod AND broke the timing chain while they were driving. The only way in hell that they are going to resurrect that thing is if they drop in an entirely new engine,or nail the thing to a cross in hopes of a miracle.

>
Daria: And either way they don't have the money or the know how to pull it off.

>
Jane: That's the way I see it, yea. But regardless of how fruitless their efforts re going to be, those guys are going to be neck deep in the tanks bowels for the next day or so.

>
Daria: Well, at least they won't be anywhere near the fireworks where they could hurt themselves.

>
Jane: (laughs) I bet they could find a way to make that happen too. So you're coming tonight then?

>
Daria: Do I really have choice?

>
Jane: Not unless you design yourself some cement shoes to hold you here, no.

>
Daria: (sighs) You know, with friends like you. Who needs to be afraid of the mob? (Jane laughs)

>
Jane: Alright then, you're there. Now all we need to do is drag the scot away from my brothers side and we're set for tonight.

>
Daria: If Trent is going to be working on the tank all day long, I thought you said dragging Maria away from your brother wasn't going to be a problem?

>
Jane: I said it SHOULDN'T, Trent hasn't started working on the tank yet so if we don't drag her away then they are going to be lip locked all day long and Trent will never get anywhere with that rusted out shit box of his. You should have seen it, she was over early this morning in his room.

>
Daria: You've got to be kidding? She didn't spend the night did she?

>
Jane: Oh hell no, are you kidding? I doubt she's let him get passed second base. Don't let the dirty mind fool you, she's in no way an easy girl.

>
Daria: You're defending her?

>
Jane: Let's just say I've seen her smack him around whenever his hand starts to wander. And what's worse is that Trent seems to like it.

>
Daria: Trent likes it a little rough, I never would have thought.....

>
Jane: (looks a little disgusted) Yea, me too. Anyway she was over modeling something for him, and then she made HIM try it on.

>
Daria: (smiles evilly) This should be good for a laugh, what was it?

>
Jane: Try to picture my brother wearing a blue kilt with black stripes. (Daria just stares open mouthed)

>
Daria: Trent's bare legs,Eww

>
Jane: I don't know, I think he looked better in it then she did. It gave him that whole Braveheart effect.

>
Daria: If you say so, Jane.

>
Jane: I do say so, now lets get going before your mind starts to generate an image on that last statement of mine.

>
Daria: It's too late for that, I think I'm going to be scarred for life now.

>
Jane: Oh well in that case I guess my job is done, so lets go anyway then.

>
Daria: I don't suppose you could let me get dressed before we head out the door?

>
Jane: Well, I figured since you had gone out driving in your underwear once before, that you really wouldn't mind doing it again.

(1)

>
Daria: Of all the people I had to tell about that, it had to be the one who would actually remember.

>
Jane: Well in my defense, you didn't really have much of a choice. I showed up at Duncan's house that morning and to my surprise YOU answered the door in your boxer shorts. Now who's fault was THAT?

>
Daria: (long moment of silence) Shut up. (Daria gets up and heads to her room to get dressed)

>
(Cut to the Lane household later that morning)

>
(Trent, Jesse, Nick, and Max are seen outside working on the tank. There are parts of the engine littering the ground along with a pan of engine oil that looks dirtier than crude itself. Maria is sitting on the nearby curb with her canine companion Cheyenne at her side as always. Maria wears a large smile as occasional swears can be heard from the group working on the tank as they proceed to take the engine apart. Daria and Jane pull up in Daria's new cavalier and approach Maria shortly after they exit the vehicle)

>
Jane: Hey.. hey, it's the kilt lady.

>
Maria: (smiles and turns in Jane's general direction) Yea, I thought that was you peeking through the doorway this morning.

>
Jane: (looks surprised) You knew I was there?

>
Maria: I heard you coming a mile away, nobody has footsteps like yours Jane.

>
Jane: Do tell, what do they sound like?

>
Maria: Now if I told you THAT, you might try to change the way you walk and I'd have to figure out what you sound like all over again.

>
Jane: Damn, I never would have thought my own feet would be the ones to betray me first.

>
Daria: Sorry to interrupt your fascinating conversation about foot noises here but what are you doing sitting on the curb, Maria?

>
Maria: (Turns towards Daria) I'm listening to the guys scrape themselves up while trying to bail water from this sinking ship here. So far, Trent has scraped his middle knuckle three times in a row, and dropped a wrench down into the engine where he can't reach it. Jesse, covered half his face in oil when he drained the engine, and Max keeps going on about how big a criminalie he's going to be when they get the tank all fixed up and running like a high performance sports car. All in all, this is better than listening to stand up comedy.

>
Daria: You can tell all of that just by listening to them work?

>
Maria: Yea, there's that and the fact that they give away some clues as to their actions while they're swearing up a storm. Saying things like, "oh god, my hair is soaked in oil" tends to describe the situation rather nicely. (A bang is heard from underneath the tank and Jesse can be heard saying some sort of gibberish, Jane and Daria

simply look at each other with smirks on their faces)

>
Jane: I can see how this would be enjoyable for you, but is there any chance we can tear you away from this past time of past times so you might join us in our days activities?

>
Maria: What days activities? I thought the fireworks weren't until later.

>
Jane: They aren't, but we have to pass the rest of the day somehow. Simply sitting here listening to these guys isn't going to cut it for too much longer. You could end up with piles from sitting on that curb for gods sake.

>
Maria: What the hell are piles?

>
Daria: I'm not sure, all I know is they make your butt hurt if you sit in one spot for too long.

>
Maria: (gets up from the curb) Guess I'd better move then, thanks for the info. So what are we up to then?

>
Daria: We'll figure it out when we get there, for now lets just get in the car.

>
Maria: (to Jane) Is she in a bad mood or something?

>
Jane: Don't mind Daria, I woke her up out of a sound sleep and the coffee hasn't had a chance to kick in yet.

>
Maria: That'll do it every time. Okay then, Daria where's your car?

>
Daria: (Takes Maria by the arm) Here, I'll lead you. (The group walks to Daria's car and before long are on the road)

>
Jane: (while riding with the window open, Cheyenne as usual has shoved her head past Jane who is riding shotgun and stuck it outside the window to let her ears flap in the wind) Hey Maria, I don't suppose you could pull your dog back. I'm afraid the wind will blow globs of dog slobber back into my face.

>
Maria: Hey, it's your fault for riding with the window open instead of using the AC. She'll sit down without a fuss if you roll the window up, you'll see.

>
Jane: (rolls the window up slowly so the dog can get her head out of the way and sure enough the dog quickly takes the hint and sits down in the back seat.) Ok Daria, hit the AC. (Daria turns the air conditioning on low and the interior of the car cools off quickly.)

>
Daria: Maria, aren't you going to ask why we didn't put the AC on in the first place?

>
Maria: Hey I figured you were all just used to riding in the tank so much that it didn't even occur to you that this car had AC.

>
Jane: (looks at Daria) She's good, ...Maria you should go into psychiatry or something.

>
Maria: Nah, it's not my thing. I just know you guys well enough to recognize the obvious.

>
Daria: Oh no, Jane. We've become obvious.

>
Jane: Doesn't that happen right before old age? I mean look at your parents.

>
Daria: (pretends to shiver) That does it, now I'm scared. (Jane Laughs)

>
Maria: Well I 'm glad to see your bad mood has worn off there, Daria. I was afraid you were still mad about the ticket or something.

>
Daria: (amused) The ticket...?

>
Jane: (turns around in her seat to look at Maria) What about... "the ticket?"

>
Maria: It was back when Daria wrecked her car, remember the deer? (2)

>
Jane: (thinks for a long moment) I remember when Duncan brought

the both of you into the pizza king and Daria bitching about having the gear shift to your brothers truck riding between her legs.

>
Maria: Close enough, While Daria and I were at the shore that Day we killed the deer, the parking meter Daria's car was parked in front of ran out of time and she got a parking ticket.

>
Jane: (shakes her head) Oh Daria, what have I told you about parking meters and the evil they represent.

>
Daria: Can it, Jane. There were no other places to park.

>
Jane: Sounds like a conspiracy Sick Sad World should investigate, don't you think?

>
Daria: Hey, if you feel like writing the letter then go right ahead. I won't mind watching it. And as far as the parking meter, That wasn't your fault. We just got delayed, that's all.

>
Maria: As long as your cool with it.

>
Jane: Is there something you two forgot to tell me about that day?

>
Daria: You'll never know will you?

>
Jane: (crosses her arms in frustration) Damn you both, I will get it out of you eventually. Oh yes, ...I will.

>
Maria: Hey Daria, have we figured out where we're going yet?

>
Daria: Yea, the Chinese place on the other side of town. They don't celebrate American holidays so they're pretty much one of the few places that will be open today.

>
Maria: So.....we're just going to hang out at a Chinese restaurant for the rest of the day?

>
Daria: Hey, it's either that or we could hang out and watch Jane's brother cut himself up while working on the tank.

>
Jane: I don't know about that Daria, he might ask us to help.

>
Daria: Hmm. You're right, bad idea. Besides it's almost four anyway, the day will be over with soon enough.

>
Maria: Why don't we just get take out then and we can head back to Daria's place. At least there we can turn on the tube and find something interesting to do.

>
Jane: By George, I think the scot has come up with a bright idea. Now she can check out your apartment and then we will ALL have seen it.

>
Daria: Thus eliminating your idea for a house warming party, huh Jane?

>
Jane: Oh yea, dammit I hate it when I do that to myself.

>
Daria: It's a plan then.

>
Maria: (Does a gesture with her hand) Engage! (Daria and Jane just shake their heads as Daria drives on)

>
(Cut to Daria's apartment about an hour later as the group comes in the front door carrying several bags of Chinese take out. Cheyenne leads Maria quickly past the others and to the nearest table to set her bag down on)

>
Daria: Hey Maria, I get the strangest feeling that your dog is hungry.

>
Maria: You noticed that too, huh?

>
Daria: Well, the fact that she was trying to get you to put the food down was my first clue.

>
Maria: (Scratches her dog behind the ears) Be still, girl. You'll be fed soon. (Cheyenne gives a cheerful bark and moves to nuzzle against Maria's leg.) Where's the kitchen, Daria?

>
Daria: Turn to your two o'clock and walk forward about fifteen paces. There shouldn't be anything in your way.

>
Maria: Cool. (Lets go of Cheyenne's leash, turns in the direction indicated by Daria and begins to make her way to the kitchen)

>
Jane: (Turns a nearby lamp on and looks about the room) This place even looks nice in low light, Daria.

>
Daria: Yea, it's good for writing and all night studying.

>
Jane: I'm guessing you haven't had any interesting young college men over here to keep you company, huh?

>
Daria: I can most definitely go with a no on that one. So don't even start with me, I'd had enough of your match making during high school.

>
Jane: I can't help it, that's what I do best. Besides, at least one of us should be able to hook up with a decent guy.

>
Daria: And Tom?

>
Jane: Tom was a mistake and a half, Daria. We both know that.

>
Daria: Yea, at least when he went after me I was smart enough to dump him after two weeks.

>
Jane: I'm proud of you for that too, Daria. It took me a whole year to figure out that he wasn't good for me.

>
Maria: (calls from the kitchen) Who's Tom?

>
Daria: Oh nobody.

>
Jane: Yea, just a past mistake.

>
Maria: (senses a slight degree of pain in Jane's voice and Decides not pry) Um...ok. (Beat) Hey , are we going to eat here or what?

>
Daria: I was wondering when she would mention eating.

>
Maria: (from the kitchen) I heard that, and I can't help it. I'm standing right here next to the table. having to inhale the scent of this Chinese food here and I can't touch it until you guys bring in the rest of the stuff.

>
Daria: (to Jane) Wow, she must really be starving.

>
Jane: I guess so, I didn't see her eating anything this morning so she may not have eaten at all today. Come to think of it I think she's lost weight since this morning, either that or her boobs just make it seem that way.

>
Maria: (from the kitchen) HEY!!

>
Daria: (smiles) Damn she has good ears.

>
Jane: Yea, I guess we should get in there before she sends the hound to come get us. Remember what that dog did to that nut who killed your sister?

>
Daria: (Frowns) You had to bring that back up didn't you?

>
Jane: Aw hell,I'm sorry.

>
Daria: (sighs) It's cool. (Walks into the kitchen with Jane a few steps behind)

>
(Daria and Jane sit down at the table in the kitchen along with Maria and begin to consume the food they had all brought back.)

>
Jane: Hey Daria, as long as we were at the Chinese place we should have shown Maria that portal to Holiday Island.

>
Maria: (Stops eating) What, portal to where?

>
Daria: Nothing, it was all a bad nightmare brought on by bad Chinese food as far as I'm concerned.

>
Jane: (smirks) Like the stuff your about to eat?

>
Daria: (scowls) I hate you Jane.
>
Maria: Daria had a bad dream? What the hell are you guys talking about?
>
Jane: Daria and I shared some sort of psycho-tropic hallucination about spirits that embodied the American holidays and all went to high school on this island through a portal in the back of that Chinese place we went to today.
>
Maria: (stops eating for a moment while she decides to push her food away or not) Ah the hell with it, it sounds like a cool ass ride the two of you had.
>
Jane: Oh yea, especially when cupid jacked Daria's parents up with something that made them act all lovey dovey on each other.

>
Maria: That's not in this food too, is it?
>
Daria: Oh no, we took all of that out and saved it for ourselves. If anybody is going to have the power to control peoples love lives then it might as well be somebody who doesn't have one.

>
Jane: Incriminating yourself are you Daria?
>
Daria: I might as well, I seem destined to spend life alone anyway. Most of the guys on this planet are jerks and the ones who aren't are taken.
>
Jane: (smirks) Like Trent, eh Daria?
>
Daria: No, he falls into one of those in- between places. Which explains how He and Maria managed to find each other.
>
Jane: And what in-between place would that be?
>
Daria: Think about it, Trent is a narcoleptic musician with a really far fetched dream, and Maria.....Forgive me, no insult is intended, but you're a blind Scottish tree with a figure and an appetite that would make a super model jealous.
>
Maria: (not sure if she should be insulted or not)
Um.....thanks, I guess.
>
Daria: You two fit into the whole opposites attract space like matching pieces to a jigsaw puzzle.
>
Maria: (thinks for a long moment) Daria,are you jealous of me?
>
Daria: No! No,I'm not jealous. I'm just depressed that all the good guys are taken.
>
Jane: Well, don't feel so bad Daria. At least you're not in that boat alone.
>
Daria; Look, can we stop talking about this please.

>
Maria: Okay, enough about me and Trent. (Thinks of something Duncan had said to her once before and smiles before deciding to change the subject) So what happened on the last SSW episode.

>
Jane: (Looks at Daria and shrugs) Oh you would have loved it, there was this old lady who had her house built to look like a giant shoe. It was the most pathetic thing you've ever seen.....

>
(After a few moments of Jane talking, Daria joins in and the subject goes on until later in the evening.)
>
(Daria, Jane, Maria, And Cheyenne leave Daria's apartment at about eight that evening, after changing the subject and talking about other people's pathetic lives for a while seems to have lifted Daria's spirits for the mean time. They arrived at the Lawndale memorial ball park and after a long exhausting search Daria manages to beat some old guy out of a parking space by blitzing across the parking lot, sliding into the space and jamming on the brakes just in time to avoid hitting the car in front of her.)

>
Maria: (After exiting the car) Daria, I don't know what in the hell you just did but you should drive for Nascar or something.

>
Jane: Strangely enough, I was just thinking the very same thing. How about it, amiga?

>
Daria: No thanks, I'll stick to beating old people out of a parking space if you don't mind.

>
Jane: Suit yourself then. Off to the fireworks!

>
Maria: So how far of a walk is it anyway?

>
Daria: (looks to where the crowds of people are piling into the park) You would have to ask that.

>
Jane: Oh come on Daria, it's not that far. We just have a hoard of people to push past.

>
Daria: I don't suppose there's any chance we could just watch from here, is there.

>
Jane: Oh sure, we'd see all the of the colorful explosions but what if one goes off on the ground, would you really be able to live with yourself if you missed that?

>
Daria: (grumbles) Start walking, Jane.

>
Jane: (smiles) Oh I love you too, honey.

>
Maria: Whoa, is there anything I need to know about with you two?

>
Jane: (Gives Maria a pat on the ass) Oh nothing you need to be concerned about. (Looks at Daria as she tries not to burst out laughing)

>
Maria: Forward Cheyenne, quickly if you don't mind. I don't want our friend here to get any ideas. (Jane bursts out laughing)

>
Jane: Oh relax, Maria. We're just pulling your chain a bit.

>
Maria: I'll just keep my distance just the same if you don't mind.

>
Jane: Suit yourself. (The group begins their trek towards the field and as they arrive at their destination Jane speaks again) Did anybody bring a blanket to sit on?

>
Daria: You want to sit on the grass?

>
Jane: Well you didn't actually think there was a chance in hell we would be able to find a spot in the bleachers with all of these people around. This place is packed for gods sake, the fact that you had to beat some old guy out of a parking spot almost a block away from the field should have been a rather significant illustration.

>
Daria: I noticed the people problem thank you very much. I just shouldn't have worn this skirt, if I keep my legs crossed for too long I start to cut the circulation off in my legs.

>
Jane: Whoa, sounds like a personal problem.

>
Daria: Does everything have to be a sexual joke to you?

>
Maria: No, actually that's me you're thinking of. (Daria rolls her eyes)

>
Jane: I'll tell you what, let's see if we can find a spot on the grass towards the front, that way if you can't keep your legs closed then there won't be anybody to look back and see your undies.

>
Daria: (scowls) I can keep my legs flat on the ground you know. I just should have worn something else. Now drop it and find us a spot.

>
Jane: (impersonates Dr. Frankenstein's helper Egor.) Yes master, ...yes master. (The group moves as far forward as they can and make a place for themselves on the grass)

>
Maria: (looks at her braille watch) Hey we've still got twenty minutes yet. Jeez, you'd think the way people were fighting to get in here, that the thing was going to start any second.

>
Daria: Hey, compared to the Christmas rush this is a walk in the park so don't complain.

>
Maria: Granted, pushing through a crowd at Christmas time is down right unsafe.

>
Daria: (gets up and brushes herself off) I'll be back in a minute.

>
Maria: Daria, we just got here. Where are you off to already?

>
Daria: I'm going to go use the bathroom. I'll be back, so don't start to miss me just yet.

>
Jane: Aw Damn, and I was going to get a head start on my worrying too.

>
Daria: Aw, you sweet thing you. It'll be a shame when we have to put you to sleep, I just wanted you to know that.

>
Jane: (cringes) Oh, that was just cold Daria. I could see frost forming on your words.

>
Daria: (smirks) I'll be back in a few. (Daria walks off past the emergency equipment and toward the bleachers)

>
Maria: Are you two like this when I'm not around or is this something you do just to make me feel special?

>
Jane: Oh no, we're like this all the time. I'll bet when Daria was born, her first thought when she saw the doctor was, "I don't remember inviting you to this." (Maria Laughs) So as long as Daria's gone, tell me all the stuff you and Trent are up to when I'm not around. I need to keep my facts straight when I'm torturing Daria with this information.

>
(Cut to Daria walking back from the bathroom several minutes later)

>
Daria: God I hate sitting on the grass, Dammit now my legs itch. (Scratches at her left leg)

>
(As Daria is walking past the emergency vehicles on her way back to the grass to meet up with Jane and Maria, she hears a familiar voice call over to her.)

>
Voice: Hey Lassie....

>
Daria: (turns to look in the direction of the voice to see Duncan sitting on the large front bumper of a pumper fire engine) You again? Is it me or are you everywhere at the same time now?

>
Duncan: (looks confused as she walks closer to him) I don't understand....

>
Daria: I seem to run into you everywhere now. Are you following me or something?

>
Duncan: What are you talking about? I'm supposed to be here, I'm part of the response crew tonight. (Looks at her as if she hasn't understood yet) I'm a firefighter, it's my bloody job remember. Besides, it's been at least a couple of weeks since we've run into each other.

>
Daria: (thinks for a moment) Ok, I may have exaggerated a little. I tried to make it into a long time no see joke but it didn't quite come out the way I originally wanted.

>
Duncan: No problem, happens to me all the time.

>
Daria: And stop calling me Lassie, what am I your pet or something?

>
Duncan: Sorry lass....er, Daria. It's sort of a natural reflex I guess.

>
Daria: Comes with being a scot huh?

>
Duncan: As sure as you loose your luggage every time you fly.

(Daria chuckles) So where is my sister and your friend Jane? I talked to Trent earlier and he said they were coming here with you.

>
Daria: They're here, we found a spot over on the grass. I just came by this was to use the bathroom.

>
Duncan: I'm not keeping you am I?

>
Daria: No, it's all taken care of.

>
Duncan: That's good to hear, nothing like tying a knot in the pisser while some daft nutball yaps his mouth off.

>
Daria: (raises an eyebrow) A knot in the pisser?

>
Duncan: (looks embarrassed) Oh bloody hell, I'm sorry lass....er, Daria. I should mind my tongue a bit, I guess.

>
Daria: (tries not to laugh) To be honest, when you try to visualize that statement it's actually pretty funny.

>
Duncan: I'm glad that you don't see me as a vulgar slob then.

>
Daria: Hey now, I didn't go THAT far. You're not a slob, and as far as vulgarity. I can put up with a small amount. Just don't start spitting it out left and right.

>
Duncan: Guess I'd better get the crazy glue then just to be safe.

>
Daria: (crosses her arms) You want to glue your lips shut? (smirks) Want some help with that? I love to watch people abuse themselves for the sake of preserving my innocence.

>
Duncan: I'll pass if you don't mind, I get the feeling you'd enjoy it just a tad to much.

>
Daria: (snaps her fingers) Damn.

>
Duncan: (gives the bumper a pat) Have a seat, you'll get a better view here if somebody accidentally sets himself on fire or something.

>
Daria: Um...I can't really. Jane and Maria are sitting on the grass waiting for me. Besides, I don't think they allow the general public this close to the fire equipment.

>
Duncan: (shrugs) If anybody asks, you're part of the crew. My buddies will vouch for you.

>
Daria: Uh huh, right. They'd do that for a complete stranger?

>
Duncan: No, they'd do it because you're a friend of mine. (Looks to see that Daria is not convinced, so he calls back to those at the rear of the truck) Hey guys.... (They stop what they are doing to look at Duncan) If anybody asks, Daria is with us tonight. (They all respond in their own way but none the less they indicated that they understand) (turns to Daria) Told you.

>
Daria: (pinches her sinuses) Not much for talking are they.

>
Duncan: They talk when it matters, that's what counts. (Gestures to the bumper her is sitting on) Have a seat Lassi....er, lass,...er, Daria.

>
Daria: (smirks) You're going to bite your tongue off if you keep trying to correct yourself like that.

>
Duncan: Aye, just make sure you know where my camera is when I do it, Who am I to miss my own sick pathetic moments in life.

>
Daria: Will do.

>
Duncan: So you'll stay and talk with me then?

>
Daria: (Gestures back to the grass where Jane and Maria are waiting and then pauses undecidedly before letting out a loud sigh) Um.....yea, I guess I could hang with you for a few minutes. It'll give my legs a chance to stop itching.

>
Duncan: I noticed that, I'm guessing they cut the grass a little too short this week. Damned stuff is like green sandpaper.

>
Daria: Yea, I couldn't help but notice the texture myself. Hence, the itchy legs.

>
Duncan: (gets up off the bumper and proceeds to a storage bin on the side of the truck to pull out a med kit) I think I've got something to handle that. (Pulls out a one time use packet and tears it open) Here, stick one of your legs out.

>
Daria: (Backs of a step) I'll pass thank you. I don't need some guys hands all over my legs.

>
Duncan: (looks slightly insulted) I'm not going to molest you or anything lass....., er Daria. (Holds up the packet) It's just aloe, it'll stop the itching so you don't end up scratching your legs to bits. But if I make you feel that uncomfortable then here. (Tosses the packet to her) Apply it yourself.

>
Daria: (looks slightly embarrassed at having reacted so harshly and waits several long moments before applying the aloe to her legs and then finally speaking) Um....., thanks.

>
Duncan: Aye, no problem. (Moves to sit back on the bumper at the front of the truck)

>
Daria: (pauses while in thought then decides to go out on a limb. She walks to the front of the truck and sits down beside him) The abbreviated version will do.

>
Duncan: (turns to look at her) Huh?

>
Daria: Lass,instead of lassie. It just sounds like your referring to me as if I were a dog.

>
Duncan: Ah,decided that seeing me bite my tongue off in effort to correct myself would just be a little so gruesome for you, eh.

>
Daria:(chuckles) Well yea, that and I'm afraid I would have to pick it up for you and carry it to the hospital so it could be reattached. That's just a little too nasty for my taste. (Duncan laughs) (pause) Um..., I'm sorry about biting your head off back there. I'm just used to being surrounded by jerks who would rather put their slimy hands all over woman just to say that they've had her.

>
Duncan: Water over the dam, lass. It was a perfectly understandable response. My sister had a similar problem back in eighth grade.

>
Daria: Do tell?

>
Duncan: Oh yea, there was this one kid, he liked to take advantage of the fact that she was blind by bumping into her on purpose so he could cop a feel. Bloody bastard probably couldn't get a date if he courted a chicken.

>
Daria: Eww.....

>
Duncan: So where was I, oh yea. She finally got tired of it and took care of the problem.

>
Daria: That's it, you're just going to leave the story at that? What did she do to the guy?

>
Duncan: (smirks) Just seeing if you were interested in hearing the rest that's all. Anyway, the kid was obvious. She could hear him coming, always cracking his knuckles, he was. So Maria brought in a stun gun she got from my mothers closet and when the kid was close enough to be certain it was him, ...ZAP. The kid woke up four hours later and for all I know was receiving FM stations through his braces.

>
Daria: (grins from ear to ear) Now THAT would have been a picture worth saving.

>
Duncan: Bloody shame though, Maria got suspended for a month for

bringing a weapon to school.

>
Daria: You mean being CAUGHT with one, you'd find a weapon on almost every kid if they actually took the time to search them all.

>
Duncan: And you?

>
Daria: (points to one of her temples) My mind was my weapon, it was the best kind you could possibly have.

>
Duncan: I'd drink to that one if I HAD a drink.

>
Daria: Can't help you there, I only just getting ready to turn nineteen myself. But I'll take it as a complement anyway.

>
Duncan: You're only eighteen? You act so much more mature than that.

>
Daria: (surprised by this, blushes slightly) Eh well, what can I say. I had to grow up fast mentally to protect myself from countless mindless morons who continually attacked my sanity. So, ...you know my age. How about yourself?

>
Duncan: (chuckles) It's funny, typically it's death if you ask a woman's age. But it never seems to mean as much to ask for a guys.

>
Daria: Hey now, don't avoid the question. If you're that shy about it then just stomp your foot once for each year.

>
Duncan: That won't be necessary, I just turned twenty two myself.

>
Daria: Funny, I pictured you as older myself.

>
Duncan: (smirks) Must be the job, being so close to heat all the time dries out the skin.

>
Daria: (covers her ears at the sound of a test rocket going up and exploding) OW! Do they have to be so loud?

>
Duncan: (looks as a small flag drifts out of the sky from where the rocket exploded) They're checking for wind direction, you haven't even heard the first of the really loud ones yet.

>
Daria: Wonderful, I hope you have aspirin handy.

>
Duncan: Aye, we usually have some floating around somewhere. (Thinks for a moment and sighs) Well, I guess you've been keeping you're friends waiting long enough. You'll be going I imagine.

>
Daria: (gets up and prepares to leave only to pause and sit back down) Uh,I don't have to leave just yet. I doubt they've even noticed how long I've been gone.

>
Duncan: Are you sure about that? I don't want Jane and Maria to think you blew them off.

>
Daria: Eh, you have a point. But I did complain about my legs itching from the grass, they'll probably figure I found a spot in the bleachers and come looking for me any time now.

>
Duncan: Good point, it's better to stay in one spot so they can find you easier. (Daria laughs)

>
(Cut to the grass at the end of the field)

>
(Maria is lying flat on the grass as Jane sits with legs crossed while stroking Cheyenne's fur and occasionally scratching the dog behind the ears)

>
Jane: So does this dog EVER leave your side, even to use the bathroom?

>
Maria: Unless we're at home or I instruct her to do so, then no. If she needs to go or something then she gives me some sort of cue so I can let go and she can do her business. To be honest, she's the best dog I've ever had.

>
Jane: So Cheyenne isn't you're first then?

>
Maria: No, I've had two others. Scarlet, my first dog was okay as a seeing eye dog. But she wasn't fixed and when she went into heat

she just went wherever the male dogs where regardless of where I needed to go. That dog met an unfortunate end when I let go of the leash this one time. She made a mad dash across the street to meet up with this other dog and got nailed by a car.

>
Jane: Bummer. It just goes to show you that you should never leave your best friend as a whole person if they are going to lead you around.

>
Maria: (chuckles) Note to self, spay or neuter all of my friends. Thanks for the tip, Jane. I'll keep it in mind the next time you and I are near a hospital.

>
Jane: (looks slightly worried) Hey now, lets limit that suggestion to the animal kingdom. I'd rather not wake up to find any unfamiliar scars on me or that a choice orifice has been sewn shut.

>
Maria: (cringes) You have no idea how nasty an image that just generated, Jane. Don't do that again.

>
Jane: Hey, I aim to please. (Looks at her hand to notice a hangnail and moves to bite at it)

>
Maria: (perks her head up) Has anyone ever told you that biting your nails is a bad habit?

>
Jane: (looks at Maria strangely) Nobody's hearing is THAT good. Are you sure you're blind behind those glasses? (Reaches over and removes Maria's dark glasses to show two dilated hazel orbs that on occasion moved about at random. After seeing this Jane replaces Maria's glasses with a slight look of disgust) Oh yea, you're blind alright.

>
Maria: You really needed proof?

>
Jane: No,I uh,just find it so hard to believe that YOU can hear a person biting their nails from a distance away, and yet OTHER people could have an elephant break wind in their faces and they would be oblivious to it.

>
Maria: Hey, no sight remember? My other senses had to compensate somehow.

>
Jane: Yea, I guess. (Looks at her watch) Hey, I wonder where Daria went off to. She should have been back a while ago.

>
Maria: She went to go use the bathroom or something didn't she?

>
Jane: Yea, but the line for the porcelain god couldn't possibly have been THAT long.

>
Maria: I imagine not, where did she have to go to get to the can?

>
Jane: Outside the fence and down past the fire trucks, why?

>
Maria: (smiles) There's your answer right there. She's been intercepted.

>
Jane: Intercepted? You make it sound like she was on some sort of covert op or something. It was just nature calling for gods sake.

>
Maria: She had to walk past the trucks, Jane. Which means my brother probably saw her and decided to talk to her. I didn't tell you he'd be here?

>
Jane: Can't say that you did.

>
Maria: Must have accidentally left that part out I guess. Eh well, Don't get your underwear in a bunch, she'll be back sooner or later.

>
Jane: (looks at the smirk on Maria's face) What are you smiling about? (Studies Maria for a moment) Oh god, ...are you setting your brother up? (Grins evilly) Why you sneaky.....

>
Maria: (changes the subject) So anyway, where were we? Oh yea,

we were talking about my past dogs.

>
Jane: (looks at Maria with a snide expression and then decides to turn the tables) Eh, that's enough about the dogs. All that talk about getting people fixed sort of gave me a sour stomach over it. Let's talk about you,my brother,and that kilt. And don't spare the details missy, I want to hear the nitty gritty.

>
Maria: Daria was right, you ARE a voyure. (Jane grins evilly at the mention of this).

>
(Cut back to Daria and Duncan about half an hour later. The first volley of rockets has begun to go up)

>
Duncan: It makes you think doesn't it? All of those rockets bursting into the air and exploding into oblivion.

>
Daria: It makes me think alright, about all of those migrant workers the fireworks company employs who probably lost a hand or finger putting those things together in lieu of "minor accidents".

>
Duncan: Well, at least those body parts weren't lost in vain. They make for a righteous show if you ask me. Just so long as those aforementioned parts don't start raining down on us, that is.

>
Daria: (smiles) Yea, I can see how that would put a tremendous damper on the evening. (The area lights up as another rocket explodes sending a loud boom beating against everyone's ear drums) Ugh, this is giving me a headache already. (Leans over to use his shoulder as a pillow) Do you mind if I borrow this?

>
Duncan: (almost does a double take at this little surprise) (vo) Well this is a switch. (Out loud) Aye, I guess. It's not very soft, lass. But it's yours if you want to use it.

>
Daria: (looks up at Duncan's expression) Don't flatter yourself, I just have a headache and I'm not ready to take an aspirin just yet.

>
Duncan: No worries, lass. (Daria leans back against his shoulder and closes her eyes occasionally jerking at the sound of an exploding rocket and believe it or not eventually fell asleep)

>
(Daria woke up about two hours later to the hum of a diesel engine and occasionally being blinded by the headlights of an oncoming car)

>
Daria: (sits up in the back seat of the fire engine cab) What the....?

>
Duncan: (sitting next to her) Ah you're awake. You were dead to the world there for a while, didn't you get any sleep last night?

>
Daria: (looks about, confused) Where the hell am I?

>
Duncan: In the truck, we're on our way back to the station.

>
Daria: What the hell am I doing in the truck? I was supposed to meet up with Jane and Maria. Oh god, are they still at the field?

>
Duncan: Relax lass, they're fine. They came to find you after the show was done but you were dead asleep. We didn't have the heart to wake you so Jane fished through your pockets for your keys and took Maria home in your car. I put you in the truck so you could sleep, I figured if you weren't up and about by the time we got to the station I'd wake you and take you home.

>
Daria: (annoyed) And how exactly would you have taken me home if Jane has my keys?

>
Duncan: (reaches into his back pocket and pulls out a thick key) This the key to your door is it? (Daria quickly grabs it from his

hand)

>
Daria: I'll be taking that back now if you don't mind. I Don't need to wake up to any more surprises.

>
Duncan: I don't mind at all, oh by the way. Jane says she'll drop your car off in the morning.

>
Daria: (shakes her head) Jane behind the wheel of MY car, what is the world coming to? She had better get that car back to me in one piece, that thing is less than a year old.

>
Duncan: As long as she doesn't let my sister drive, things should go well I think.

>
Daria: Here's hoping.

>
(The truck slows down as it prepares to pull into the station)

>
Duncan: We're here already? What a short ride, it seemed longer on the way down. (After several moments the truck backs into the garage and everybody piles out and begins to lock away any loose equipment then everybody leaves to their own vehicles and heads home)

>
(Cut to Daria's apartment as Duncan walks her to the door)

>
Daria: You didn't have to walk me to the door you know.

>
Duncan: Why not, it's the honorable thing last time I checked. Besides, I wanted to prove that not all of us guys are jerks.

>
Daria: Yea, ...you're not so bad Duncan.

>
Duncan: Ah, enough of the mush lass. You're going to make me blush or something.

>
Daria: (smiles) Now what damage could that possibly do to a guy?

>
Duncan: Imagine a guys ego as a balloon going down like the Hindenburg. (Daria bursts out laughing)

>
Daria: Leave it to me to cause an emotional catastrophe. (Waits a moment) You CAN leave now you know, I'm safely to my door. (Beat) Or is there something else?

>
Duncan: Depends on how you look at it, I was just reflecting on how we seem to keep running into each other.

>
Daria: (fishing for more info) And...?

>
Duncan: I thought that maybe we should just schedule our random meetings. Put some order to things, you know?

>
Daria: (looks at him unenthusiastically) Are you.....asking me out,or something?

>
Duncan: Well, if you want to be cut and dry about it. Aye...

>
Daria: (looks at him with a slightly repulsed expression which slowly morphs into a slight smile) That has GOT to be the weakest request for a date I've ever heard. (Duncan looks down slightly expecting to be turned down) But,... it's also the most sincere I've heard. (Daria takes a step forward and gives Duncan a very light kiss on the cheek) I'll give it some thought and let you know.

>(Daria turns to unlock her door and soon disappears behind it leaving a confused Duncan on the steps)

>Duncan: I'll be waiting then..... (He turns and slowly walks back to his pickup truck)

>The end.....

>Footnotes :

>1.) A reference to "Shadowed Wings", where Daria during a bout of insomnia drove about in middle of the night without noticing she was still wearing some of her bedclothes.

>2.) Reference to "Issues" Where Daria got a parking ticket at the

shore shortly before hitting a deer with her car on the way home. Also the segment of this series where Daria first meets Maria's brother Duncan.
>Feedback is always appreciated, I may be reached at wildgoose81@hotmail.com

7. Strange Bonds

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV

>
Note: This story is the next in the Unseen Phenomena Series. It takes place one week after "By the Twilight."

>

> Strange Bonds
 By

> Wildgoose

>
(The visible area is filled with a very dense smoke, The hand in front of the face can barely be seen. It is almost unbearably hot here, as Duncan crawls on all fours along the side of a hallway in search of the next door. A heavy concentration of soot in the air accents the beam of his high intensity flashlight making it seem almost like a laser cutting through the air. The echoed sounds of breathing are heard through an oxygen mask as someone's voice comes over a wireless com piece that Duncan wears under the mask.)

>
Voice: Duncan, say your position, ...over.

>
Duncan: That you max?

>
Max: It always is,now give me your position.

>
Duncan: Alright, keep your knickers on. I'm on the second floor, approaching the third door on the left hand side. There's no sign of anyone yet, are you sure there's anybody sill in here?

>
Max: The report is that a young woman about eighteen years old is unaccounted for and may still be in the house. She answers to the name of Eileen.

>
Duncan: Wonderful, why can't these people ever figure out where their own kids are.

>
Max: Who knows, you know how teenagers are these days. They take off in the middle of the night without telling a soul where they're going. Damned irresponsible if you ask me.

>
Duncan: (still searching for the next door) It's easy for you to say that,you have kids. I was a teenager only a few years ago myself, so it's still easy for me to understand why they do that.

>
Max: Oh good, then enlighten me. I'm waiting on your pearls of wisdom here, Duncan.

>
Duncan: (Stops and feels around) You're going to have to wait a bit longer then, I've found the next door. (Shouts through the door) Is anybody in there!! Eileen, are you conscious!? (Into the com) Max, I've got no response. I'm getting ready to go in.

>
Max: Use caution, the spotters on the ladder say the fire is on the floor above you and may be working it's way down through though the wet wall.

>
Duncan: Bloody marvelous. Forget the navy, THIS job is the real adventure.

>
Max: That's for damned sure.

>
Duncan: (reaches up for the door knob to feel it) The knob is warm, but not hot. I'm going in...

>(Duncan twists the knob and is about to open the door when he gets a strange sensation from directly behind him. He turns to see as clear as day, a red head in a cobalt blue overcoat trying to say something

to him that he can't hear.) Are you Eileen? Jesus woman, don't you know the bloody house is on fire? You need to get the hell out of here!

>Max: (over the com) Duncan, who the hell are you talking to?

>Duncan: (looks at the woman trying to read her lips) Don't,.....I don't understand. No...no, ...no door. (Thinks for a moment) Don't open the door? (Duncan looks back at the door and then looks down at the bottom to see that smoke is being sucked into the room from under the door)FUCK ME!! (Lets go of the door and gets up to run) (into the com) Back draft, ...Back draft, clear the building!! (As he starts to run, the door which was no longer tightly shut opens a crack giving the smoldering fire behind the door exactly what it needs, ...air. The door explodes engulfing the immediate hallway in a wall of fire and sending a shockwave through the extent of the hallway launching Duncan into the air landing him hard against the staircase banister at the end of the hallway as the now compromised ceiling rains down on him)

>(The scene fades and comes back opening at a hectic moment as a Gurney is quickly wheeled in from the outside into the emergency entrance of a local area hospital. The scene is frantic, EMT's reading off med stats as the hospital emergency team takes over and begins to prep the patient for treatment as they move in unison down to a vacant spot in the emergency room. The patient as you look down on him is lying face down with the head in a brace and lacking most of his original clothing as it was necessary to cut them to shreds to get them off without augmenting the current injuries. There are burns and liquid filled blisters all over the mans back)

>Nursel: (Wraps a hospital I.D bracelet around the patients wrist.) Jeez, what the hell happened to this guy.

>EMT1: Volunteer firefighter, he was working on that place that went up over on fifth. He was inside looking for survivors and the ceiling came down on him.

>Nurse2: (Takes the patients pulse) I've got a pulse but it's dropping slowly, shock is starting to set in. Start him on a ringer of 5 percent saline and lets see if we can get it back up into the green. Who's got the rest of the stats?

>EMT2: (with out any hesitation) Second degree burns on the arms and back, no thirds. Apparent moderate concussion, pupils are sluggish but still responsive. Definite smoke inhalation for a prolonged period. Also, a compound fracture of the left tibia with significant blood loss as well as possible fractured ribs. No known allergies to medication or previous ailments.

>Nurse2: I'll prepare to hook him to the hospital O2 supply. (Jogs off to rig an assembly)

>Nursel: (to a third nurse) Start a blood type search stat, before this guy losses more than his consciousness on us. And call the CMO (chief medical officer) on duty and tell him to prepare for a cat scan and an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) as soon as the patients vitals are stabilized. (Nurse three obtains a syringe and draws several blood samples before running off to start a match. The patient is wheeled into his space in the emergency room and Nursel as well as others continue to work) And somebody locate his family!

>(Cut to Jane's house late that same evening)

>(Trent is sitting on Jane's bed while Maria sits in his lap with one of Trent's hands wrapped about her waist. Jane stands a short distance behind her easel while attempting to paint a portrait of the two of them.)

>Jane: Hey Trent, you're supposed to be holding her tight not feeling

her up.

>Trent: (looks up) Huh?

>Maria: (smirks) She means take your hand off my boob, your making her feel left out.

>Trent: (moves his hand and blushes) Sorry.

>Maria: (turns and gives him a kiss on the cheek) (speaks in a Scottish accent just for him) You're busted ye` daft twit. The next time, wait until we're in private. (Resumes an American accent) Sorry Jane, hope you weren't about to lose your lunch on us.

>Jane: No, which is a shame now that I think about it. It probably would have added a unique display of color to the portrait.

>Daria: (Enters the room eating some cookie dough) What would have?

>Jane: Oh nothing, my brother was just displaying some public affection.

>Daria: Wow, I'm glad I missed it then. I guess it was good timing for me to get hungry, huh?

>Jane: Oh yea. ...But as long as you were raiding the fridge, I hope you brought back enough of that dough for me. (Daria breaks off a large chunk of the dough and hands it to Jane)

>Daria: Of coarse I did, As if my life depended on it.

>Jane: (smirks and points one of her brushes at Daria) Funny that you should mention that.

>Daria: Why what are you going to do, paint me into submission?

>Jane: Hey, you know as well as I do that the almighty paint brush has a mind of it's own. It may very well demand a sacrifice for your insolence.

>Daria: (raises an eyebrow) Um,Jane?

>Jane: (holds the paint brush far out in front of herself) Foolish mortal, bow down to the almighty paint brush and all may be forgiven!!!

>Daria: Um, ...Jane?? I brought you the damned cookie dough already, get a life.

>Jane: (looks in her hand to see the cookie dough and takes a bite before speaking with a full mouth) Oh yea, ...sorry. I get carried away sometimes.

>Daria: (mumbles) You'll get carried away alright, to a funny farm if you're not careful. (Maria chuckles as she seems to be the only other person in the room who heard the comment)

>Jane: (puts her brush down on the easel) Oh no, ...no secrets. What are you laughing about, Maria? Was Daria mumbling something again?

>Maria: I'll plead the fifth on that one, Jane. I fear that no matter what my answer, somebody is likely to kill me.

>Jane: Damned justice system.

>Daria: Why don't you ask your almighty paint brush for the answer?

>Jane: No good, it doesn't feel like talking right now.

>Daria: Too bad.

>Jane: Yea, tell me about it. (Thinks for a moment) Well, the paintbrush is tired so what else is on the agenda for tonight?

>Trent: What, you're not going to finish the painting?

>Jane: (Picks up the painting and turns it around to show Maria in Trent's lap with the pose before Trent put his hand in a precarious position) I finished it a long time ago, I just got a kick out of making the two of you sit in a very uncomfortable position for all that time.

>Trent: (picks up a nearby pillow on the floor and throws it at Jane)
You're just mean, Janie.

>Jane: (Tries to shield the painting) Hey now, the paint is still wet
on this baby. Be careful!

>Maria: (gets up off Trent's lap and proceeds to stretch) Ugh,
....I'm stiff.

>Jane: (she and Daria tilt their heads upward as Maria gets up) Is
it me or does she get taller every time we see her.

>Daria: This is a guess, Jane. But I think it's you.

>Jane: How tall is she again?

>Daria: Six foot four, I think.

>Jane: And we're how tall?

>Daria: I'm about five foot three, I think you're about the same.

>Jane: (shakes her head) They don't make them like her anymore, I
guess.

>Daria: What tipped you off? (The phone rings and Jane walks out of
the room to get the cordless in the kitchen, she soon returns with
the hand set and proceeds to hand it over to Maria)

>Jane: Hey Maria, There's some woman with an accent on the phone
asking to speak to you. I think this might be your mom.

>Maria: (Takes the phone from Jane) You have a talent for noticing
the obvious, Jane.

>Jane: (takes a bow) Hey, I try.

>Maria: (into the phone) Hey mom....slow down, What have you got a
frog in your throat? You sound like a congested Englishman. (Long
pause)oh god, I'll be there as soon as I can. (Maria hangs
up the phone and feels behind her for a place to sit, but misses the
mark and stumbles to the floor.)

>Daria: Maria, are you all right? What did your mom say?

>Maria: (pulls her dark glasses off of her face and wipes some newly
formed tears from her eyes) Duncan's in the hospital, he's been hurt
pretty bad.

>Trent: Oh god....., what happened?

>Maria: I don't know,I ,I have to get out of here. I'm
sorry you guys.

>Jane: I'll give you a lift, we can take my car.

>Daria: Jane, your car hasn't had any gas for the past month. We'll
take my car.

>Maria: Whatever, I don't care who's car it is. I just need to go,
....can we go NOW please?

>Daria: Yea, let me get my keys off the downstairs counter and I'll
meet you guys at the front door. (Shortly after the group leaves in
Daria's Cavalier and heads for the community hospital)

>(Cut to The hospital waiting room)

>(Daria, Jane, Trent, Maria, and Cheyenne enter through the
emergency entrance and are immediately confronted by a nurse
concerning the dog)

>Nurse: I'm sorry, this is a hospital. We can't allow any animals in
here.

>Maria: (pulls her glasses off so the nurse can get a good look at
her eyes) Seeing eye dog, you refuse her and not only will you find
yourself in police custody right quick, but you'll be swamped with a
legal battle you won't soon forget.

>Nurse: look, ...

>Maria: Daria is your mom still a lawyer?

>Daria: Are you kidding?

>Maria: Good, can you get her on your cell phone for me? I'm sure
she'd be interested in this case.

>Daria: You've got it. (Starts fishing through her pocket for her phone)

>Nurse: (grits her teeth Slightly) Look, just....make sure the dog doesn't make a mess. (Walks away)

>Maria: (calls after the woman) Nice meeting you too! (Turns to Daria) Is she still in the area, I want to make sure she heard me.

>Daria:(smirks) I'm sure she did.

>Jane: (taps Daria on the shoulder) Don't look now but we've been spotted by the parental units.

>Daria: (Turns to look where Jane has directed her attention to see Maria's parents approaching. Her mother is a red head just like Maria only much shorter, maybe an inch or so taller than Daria and Jane. Maria's father on the other hand is a black haired stocky man who happens to be slightly taller than Maria) So that's where she gets it from,damn. (Maria's parents rush forward and embrace her in sort of a group hug)

>Maria: (grunts) Ugh, back off everybody. You're crushing me. (They let go) How's Duncan?

>Kyrsten (keer-sen)(Maria's mother): Oh it's good to see you, Your brother is pretty banged up but he's going to live.

>Maria: What happened?

>Michael (Maria's father): I'll tell you what happened, that fool hobby of his is what happened. He was inside some building and the ceiling came down on him.

>Kyrsten: (to Michael) Look love, regardless how we feel about it. This is what the boy loves to do, and we told him when he first started that we'd respect his decision.

>Michael: Aye, and look at where it's gotten us.

>Maria: Is Duncan awake?

>Michael: No, he's been unconscious since he came in. They won't let us up to see him until they've moved him to a room,bastards.

>Kyrsten: We've been camped out in this room since we got here.

>(In the distance an automated sliding glass door leading to the emergency room opens and a female doctor carrying a clipboard and other paraphernalia. She walks halfway through the waiting room before stopping and looking up to speak)

>Doctor: Kyrsten and Michael Macleod?

>Jane: (looks at Daria and smirks while speaking in a hushed tone) Kyrsten?? (Daria looks back and shrugs)

>Michael: Aye, over here. (The doctor approaches them)

>Doctor: Hi, I'm Dr. Lasky. (Shakes their hands) I've got some information on your son Duncan, if you and the rest of your family would care to step into a conference room over to my right here, I can fill you in on what's going on.

>Michael: Aye, (looks at Maria) Keep up behind us, Maria.

>Maria: I think I can handle that. Cheyenne, follow dad. (At this command the dog leads Maria forward almost on her fathers heels and into the conference room where the doctor closes the door behind her and everyone has a seat)

>(Inside the conference room)

>Dr. Lasky: Okay, first and most important your son is stable. The lightest of his injuries seems to be some bruised ribs, which he should recover quickly from I think. He's suffered a nasty concussion so he may not regain consciousness tonight, but the way it's looking it's only a matter of time before he comes around. (Loads a disk into a nearby computer and after a moment turns the monitor around so

everyone can see) This is an MRI of your sons brain. As you can see here, the point of impact came at the base of the skull right about here. (Points to an area where the spine meets the skull) It looks like an extreme force of some sort threw him against something else pretty hard. But....surprisingly enough the only real damage is cranial swelling which we've taken measures to control and a bruised vertebrae. The swelling should begin to subside during the night and possibly the next day or two, his neck is going to be stiff for a good while though..

>Maria: Will he be able to remember anything when he regains consciousness?

>Dr. Lasky: (bites her lower lip briefly while in thought) There's no actual trauma to the brain itself that I can detect, ... so I don't see why he shouldn't. He may have trouble recalling things at first but as the swelling comes down it will all come back to him I think.

>Kyrsten: (crosses herself) Thank you god....

>Dr. Lasky: Um...okay, anyway getting along here. Duncan has sustained second degree burns along the left and right sides of his back. The fact that there are none in the middle suggests that he was wearing something that protected him in that area. I'm told that your son is a firefighter, so I'm guessing that "something" was probably an oxygen tank. (Sighs) The burns ALSO appear on the backside of his arms suggesting that he was in the process of running away from what caused this. (Maria's mother buries her face in her husbands chest as she tries not to cry)

>Michael: It's alright, he'll bounce back. You watch...

>Dr. Lasky: (wishes she didn't have to go on) He's suffered smoke inhalation, but we'll put him on some antibiotics that will prevent any sort of infection. (Pauses to gather her thoughts for a moment) Your son will be going into surgery soon.

>Kyrsten: (looks up in shock) Surgery??

>Dr. Lasky: The procedure your son needs to undergo isn't complicated. Duncan has sustained a compound fracture of the tibia in his left leg and in order to set it back to where it needs to be to allow the healing process to begin the piece of bone that pierced the skin will need to be moved and set and then pins inserted before we can stitch up the open wound . There has however as a result been some significant blood loss. We've been able to give him some of what he needs but, blood supplies are low this time of year and your sons blood type is rare. AB negative, so we'd like to ask at this time is that any of you who are able, to donate blood. Do any of you possess his type?

>Kyrsten: No, I uh....I'm AB positive the last time I checked. (The doctor looks at Michael)

>Michael: (Shakes his head) B negative. (The Dr. looks at Maria)

>Dr, Lasky: How about you?

>Maria: The NAME is Maria, and I have no clue. I've always hated needles.

>Dr. Lasky: Would you consider donating? There's always additional bleeding during surgery, even as minor as this, and what we have on hand may not be enough.

>Maria: (whimpers) Yea,yea, I can do that. Just warn me when they're going to shove the needle in, will you. I'll ask my friends in the waiting room too, maybe they can help.

>Dr, Lasky: Every little bit helps. That's all for now, I'll keep you posted. (Everyone gets up from the table) Mrs. Macleod?

>Kyrsten: Aye?

>Dr. Lasky: Um, I couldn't help but note that your religious. I'm not sure what denomination you follow but there is a small church on the third floor should you be interested.

>Kyrsten: Aye, thank you. (They all move to leave the room)

>(Cut to the waiting room where Daria and Jane have taken seats and are flipping through some magazines)

>Maria: (As Cheyenne leads her towards Daria) Daria?

>Daria: (turns to look at Maria) Hey Maria, How's Duncan?

>Maria: He's seen better days, they're saying he needs some rare blood and they want to know if we can donate.

>Jane: Rare huh, let me guess AB negative?

>Maria: How did you know?

>Jane: It's the only rare blood I know of. And don't look at me, I'm O positive.

>Daria: (Raises her hand slightly) I know I'm going to hate this, But....I'm AB negative.

>Maria: I don't suppose you could lie down on a table somewhere and start bleeding for me?

>Daria: You know, for some reason I always imagined those words to come from the mouth of a vampire, or at least a wannabe. (Maria smirks)

>Maria: Thanks Daria, I really appreciate this.

>Daria: No problem.

>Jane: Do you want me to come with you for moral support?

>Daria: And let you watch me squirm as somebody shoves a needle into one of my arteries? No way.

>Jane: Damn! Oh well, it was worth a shot at least.

>Daria: (Looks squeamish) Let's hurry up and do this, the thought of me lying on a table while some guy drains blood out of me makes me want to lose my lunch. (Daria leads Maria over to the nurses station to make arrangements to donate. They are soon led through the automated sliding glass door to an adjacent room)

>(At about two in the morning Dr. Lasky came down to wake everyone up and inform them that Duncan had been moved to a room, and that only immediate family would be permitted to go up to see him at this time. Daria, Jane, and Trent understandingly conceded and asked Maria and her family to keep them informed as they prepared to leave for home)

>(Cut to Jane's house as everyone comes in the front door looking for a place to fall down)

>Jane: I wonder if Maria would be able to get the doctor to give me a copy of that MRI. I've never had a photograph of someone's brain before.

>Daria: Under the circumstances Jane, I think now would be extremely poor timing to ask for such a thing. But you're right, that would be cool.

>Trent: Man, can you imagine what those burns of his must look like? All filled with puss, and blistery. God, that's going to give me nightmares just thinking about it.

>Daria: Thank you Trent, we're so glad you were able to share that nightmare with us. Why should you be the only person who won't get to sleep?

>Trent: Sorry, I couldn't help but think about it.

>Jane: Well, while you're thinking about it there, Trent. Keep your ears peeled for the phone in case we get a call from Duncan's family.

>Trent: No problem, we musicians are good listeners?

>Jane: Really? The way you used to sleep through class in highschool, I never would have guessed.

>Trent: Hey, I just hear better when one of my ears is pressed against a desk, that's all. Vibrations, you know?

>Daria: (looks at Trent oddly) Trent, tell me honestly. When you hear yourself talk about music, does it make sense to you?

>Trent: Always.

>Daria: (smirks) Just checking.

>Trent: (sighs and has a seat on the couch) It makes you think doesn't it?

>Daria: (V.O) Now where have I heard THAT before? (Out loud) What does?

>Trent: What happened to Duncan. I mean, here's a guy who volunteers for a dangerous job so that other people won't get hurt. And here, he gets all screwed up for his trouble. What's THAT about?

>Jane: Trent, the guy knew the risks. It's like playing poker, he just got dealt a bad hand.

>Daria: Besides, it could have been worse. At least the doctor is confident that he'll recover.

>Trent: Yea, I know. And that's terrific, but now it's got my mind going a mile a minute. If something like this could happen to a guy with everything going for him, What about somebody with a disadvantage?

>Jane: (crosses her arms across her chest) You're worried about Maria, now?

>Trent: I couldn't handle it if something happened to her man, I'd crumble.

>Jane: (speaks in a hushed tone to Daria) Jesus, they've got it for each other worse than I thought.
(To Trent) Trent, for god sake. Why don't you just marry the girl so you can watch over her twenty four seven? (Trent perks his head up and looks at Jane) (V.O) Oh god, what HAVE I just done?
>
Trent:(pauses for several moments before smirking) No deal, Janie. We're not ready for something like that.

>
Daria:(chuckles and speaks in a hushed tone to Jane) Jane Lane, I think Lady luck just saved your ass.
>
Jane: Yea, that WAS close wasn't it?
>
Daria: Look Trent, you can't spend your life worrying about every little thing that might happen. You just do your best with what you've got, and hope nothing goes wrong.
>
Trent: I guess. (Beat) So... as long as you're all over here, what's the plan for tomorrow?
>
Daria: The same plan we'd have if any of US was hurt. We wait for a phone call saying it's ok to come visit and then we haul our ass's down there.
>
Jane: And having said that, story hour has now come to an end. Please extinguish any smoking materials before going to bed as we'd all like to wake up in the morning a little less than crispy. And having accomplished that, find a suitable place around the house and fall down for the night. (At having said this Jane walks over to the light switch and no sooner has Trent left the room she turns the light off) Good night, Daria.
>
Daria: I take it we're not going to snooze in your room tonight?

>
Jane: We can't, I left a can of paint open earlier when I was doing that painting of Trent and the scot.
>
Daria: Yea, and?
>
Jane: Well, it sort of spilled all over my sheets just before we all rushed out the door earlier.

>
Daria: I guess you won't be sleeping in your own bed for a while then.

>
Jane: Nope, it's the couch for this girl.

>
Daria: I don't suppose, since it's obvious that I'm being dealt the floor here, that you could give me a blanket or something? Preferably without any paint on it.

>
Jane: Yea, there's that old sleeping bag in my closet.

>
Daria: (dryly) I don't suppose you could turn on the light?

>
Jane: No, that would require movement and I just don't have the energy right now.

>
Daria: You're a real pain in the ass, you know that right Jane?

>
Jane: That fact has been pointed out to me on numerous occasions, yes. (Daria sighs deeply and finds her way in the dark to Jane's room and eventually returns with the sleeping bag.)

>
Daria: How Maria is able to do this so well, I'll never know. (Jane is heard chuckling in the darkness. After several moments Daria finds her spot on the floor near Jane and wraps herself up in the sleeping bag and nods off)

>
(Cut to the hospital sometime around noon the next day)

>
Daria: (Peeks in the door to Duncan's hospital room to notice that Duncan is still unconscious and that Maria is the only person currently in the room with him. Daria walks quietly through the door and is about to say something to Maria when she hears some very light snoring.) Sorry friend, Jane's got you beat in the snoring department. (Gives Maria a few light taps on the shoulder to wake her up and after a moment she stirs in her chair)

>
Maria: Huh, ...What? (Listens for a moment)Who's there?

>
Daria: It's just me Maria.

>
Maria: Daria? I wasn't expecting you so soon, ...what time is it?

>
Daria: (Looks at her watch) About half past noon. Have you been here all night?

>
Maria: Yea, My parents were getting pretty tired so I volunteered to stay here with my brother so they could get some sleep.

>
Daria: I see you were catching up on some yourself.

>
Maria: It couldn't be helped I guess. I didn't even notice that I nodded off.

>
Daria: It's no big deal. I'm sure your brother will appreciate the fact that you stayed with him. (Looks about the room) Maria, where's your dog?

>
Maria: (stops to listen for a long moment) I'm not sure. (Speaks loudly) Cheyenne?? (A bark is heard from the bathroom off to the side of the room)

>
Daria: (Walks to where she heard the dog bark from to see Cheyenne squatting on top of the bowl with all four paws perfectly balanced on either side. After a moment the dog jumps off the bowl and after several tries manages to flush the toilet by pressing on the lever with her front paw and then walks past Daria to Maria's side) (in amazement) Maria, you HAVE to tell me how you taught that dog to do that.

>
Maria: Do what?

>
Daria: Maria, I just saw your dog use the toilet like a regular

person.

>
Maria: (scratches Cheyenne behind one ear) Really? I didn't teach her that.

>
Daria: Did the people who trained her teach her that?

>
Maria: I don't think so, I was there every step of the training process and I don't ever recall covering that. I guess it would explain why she never barks to go out at night, though.

>
Daria: So,your saying the dog taught HERSELF to do that?

>
Maria: The only explanation I can think of is that she watched everyone in my house do it enough times to pick it up.

>
Daria: You let the dog follow you into the bathroom? Don't you ever shut the door?

>
Maria: Of coarse, but she sometimes find her way in there anyway. I don't know how she does it.

>
Daria: (Shakes her head in amazement) That dog needs to appear on Ripley's believe it or not, I swear she does. (Sighs and looks over at Duncan) So how is your brother doing?

>
Maria: About the same I think, I haven't heard him move or say anything. But I did hear him pass gas a couple of times so I guess that's step in the right direction.

>
Daria: Good point, you can't give off positive signals like that unless your alive.

>
Maria: They must have put some sort of lotion on the burns on his back. I've been smelling something funky in here all morning.

>
Daria: Are you sure that's not your brother?

>
Maria: Pretty sure, this is a different smell entirely.

>
Daria: (sniffs the air and sure enough there is a very faint odor. Daria walks up to Duncan to investigate) Yea, it looks like they did put something on him. It's probably some sort of antibiotic to prevent an infection from setting in. Either that or it's something to help the skin heal (Studies the burns on Duncan's Back) Ugh, those blisters look like they're going to hurt like hell when he wakes up.

>
Maria: If they feel the way people have described them to me then I don't doubt it. (Thinks for a moment) Hey Daria, where are the others?

>
Daria: Jane had one of her summer art classes this morning and Trent had to go to work. I still can't believe he actually holds a job now.

>
Maria: It's not so hard to believe, you just have to know how to motivate him. (Daria looks at her suspiciously)

>
Daria: Uh huh... (decides to dismiss the notion) Anyway, um....if you want I can stay here with your brother if you want to call your parents so you can go home and get some sleep.

>
Maria: Eh, that's no good. They both had to go to work today, that's why I offered to stay so they could go home. If they stayed here all day they would have both paced a hole in the floor, so at least work will keep their minds off the situation for a bit.

>
Daria: It was a thought at least.

>
Maria: Yea, it was. I appreciate it too, Daria. You can still stay if you want, these chairs are actually pretty comfortable. I can get some more sleep while you keep an eye on Duncan.

>
Daria: (shrugs) Doesn't sound too complicated. Just try to keep the snoring to a minimum, will you?

>
Maria: I snore? That's news to me.

>
Daria: Well, you haven't reached freight train noise levels yet but like everyone else it's just a matter of time.

>
Maria: (shrugs) I'll give it my best effort then. (Daria moves over to a chair and has a seat while Maria gets comfortable in hers and soon drifts off to sleep. After about two hours Maria is sound asleep and her snoring has kicked back in. Daria rolls her eyes and decides to be grateful that it's at a tolerable level. Daria thinks for several moments and then gets up to move her chair over next to Duncan's bed to keep a closer eye on him)

>
Daria: (After several moments Daria decides to break the silence) At the risk of making myself look like a nutcase if somebody happens to come in and see me talking to what would seem like myself here, I thought maybe you and I could have a little heart to heart Duncan. (Beat) I've heard that talking to someone even if it seems like they can't hear you can sometimes help to speed the healing process along. I've....uh, had some things on my mind since last week. That odd little incident after the fireworks to be specific,I've been tossing it about in my mind almost everyday now trying to figure out why out of the blue you decided to ask for a date.

(Pauses) I mean,....we've known each other for what,... a year now? Granted,... we met under some rather unique circumstances, but still. I've never really noticed any sort of clues that you might like me in THAT fashion. I mean,.. I can relate to you pretty well. I think you're about the first guy besides Trent that I've felt comfortable talking too. (Daria is silent for several long moments before speaking again) But when you asked me, I was all set to give you the "you're a nice guy and all" brush off when for some reason,... I started to dwell on the manner in which you asked. I have to admit it was the first sincere request I've ever heard from a guy. I couldn't help but melt the more I thought about it, it was so... odd.

(Chuckles) And that kiss on the cheek, I have absolutely NO idea where THAT came from. No premeditation had gone into that at ALL, I mean.... (Kyrsten's voice is heard coming from the doorway)

>
Kyrsten: (wearing a weak but hopeful smile) Is he awake?

>
Daria: (Startled, snaps her head up to look at the person speaking and then grabs her neck as if she pulled a muscle) OW! Damn....

>
Kyrsten: (walks further into the room) Are you Ok?

>
Daria: I'll live.

>
Kyrsten: It's just that I heard you talking and I thought that maybe....

>
Daria: (face turns beet red in embarrassment) No, I uh.....um....just thought talking to him might help. (Beat) Somehow. (Awkward pause) So,I'm surprised to see you here. Maria told me that you had to work today.

>
Kyrsten: Aye, I did. But my boss let me get off early so I could come down here. (Looks at Maria) Can't leave the girl here all day. I doubt she's eaten anything since last night.

>
Daria:(under her breath) Now there's something you don't hear everyday. (Out loud) I can take her home Mrs. Macleod, you stay here with Duncan. You'd probably do him more good than I would anyway.

>
Kyrsten: Good lord, lass. Don't call me Mrs. Macleod, it makes me sound old as purgatory itself. Just call me Kyrsten.

>
Daria: O.....k, Kyrsten. Let me just wake Maria's butt up and we'll leave you to spend some quality time with Duncan.

>
Kyrsten: (smiles) Aye, I'll thank you for that.
>
Daria: No problem. (Walks over to Maria and kicks her feet lightly) Hey sleeping beauty, you're mom's here. (Kicks her again when she doesn't wake up) HEY!
>
Maria: Mmmph....huh? What...? (Sits up in her chair and is still for a moment) Mom, are you here?
>
Kyrsten: Aye...
>
Daria: (confused) How did you know she was here? You were asleep when she got here.
>
Maria: (Smiles) It's kind of personal, ...maybe I'll tell you later.
>
Daria: (shrugs) Whatever.
>
Maria: Any change in Duncan?
>
Daria: (smirks) As a matter of fact, while you were asleep he decided to give the severe injury act a rest and walked out to get some coffee, and when he came back he performed swan lake right in front of you. He's really a good dancer.
>
Maria: (sighs) No change at all, huh?
>
Daria: Nope, sorry. Um, listen you're mom wants you to head home for a bit. She's going to stay with your brother for a while.

>
Maria: Thanks mom. (Gets up and feels around in front of her until she runs into her mother, then gives her a hug just before Cheyenne leads Maria out of the room right behind Daria)

>
Daria: (once they are out of the room) Affectionate bunch aren't you. (Maria just nods)
>
Maria: I hope you didn't mind staying with my brother while I snoozed.
>
Daria: Nah. We found something to talk about. (Maria wears an amused expression)
>
(Cut to That evening)
>
(Daria and Jane are sitting on the couch in the living room of Daria's apartment while flipping through the channels on the television)
>
Jane: Is it me, or is does the quantity of quality entertainment on tv become less and less with every passing day?
>
Daria: Hey, I guess quality violence just isn't what it used to be. All the good movie plots have been used a hundred times already. There are only so many cool ways to mutilate somebody on tv before the general populous becomes desensitized to it and inevitably bored with it.
>
Jane: Sad, ...but true. (Changes the subject) So what else is there to do around here? Oh yea, you were telling me earlier about Maria's snoring.
>
Daria: Didn't we totally exhaust that subject? How many times can you describe a person snoring?
>
Jane: I don't know, make it interesting somehow. Exaggerate the noise level or something, turn it into a story you could frighten your future kids with.
>
Daria: If I wanted to come up with a story like that, then I think your brothers new found sex life would make for a far more frightening topic.
>
Jane: You mean his LACK of one. That girl has a rock solid belief in her principals, she doesn't let him get very far.

>
Daria: Jane Lane, spying on your own brother? Shame on you. (Beat) So are you going to post the photo's on the Internet?

>
Jane: I can't, Trent intercepted me later and confiscated them.

>
Daria: Really? So... not so oblivious as we were led to believe,so much the better. (Smirks)

>
Jane: Yea, those pictures would have looked great on a new web site too. I bet it would done a whole hell of a lot better than Jane cam. (Lets out a small groan) So, how is the scot's brother?

>
Daria: Still unconscious, and still a little on the crispy side.

>
Jane; (frowns) You saw the his injuries did you?

>
Daria: (looks down towards the floor) Yea, his back is covered with second degree burns. He's gonna be in a good amount of pain when he wakes up. I'm just glad I couldn't see what that leg looked like underneath the brace.

>
Jane; I can imagine, compound fractures are no pretty sight to see from what I've heard. (Looks at Daria who is still looking at the floor) Something else is on your mind isn't there?

>
Daria: (doesn't look at Jane) Maybe....

>
Jane: Want to talk about it?

>
Daria: That depends, can you listen without turning it into something that it isn't?

>
Jane: Hmm, I don't know. You know better than anybody how I operate.

>
Daria: (looks up at Jane) That's what I was afraid of, I guess it's not that important then.

>
Jane: (looks at Daria as if she were trying to read her mind) You're serious aren't you? Something is bugging you THAT much?

>
Daria: I thought you couldn't just sit back and listen?

>
Jane: Hey, on occasion, when it's called for. A tiger can change her stripes, if just for a little while to help a friend in need.

>
Daria: Even if that friend once totally destroyed another friends hair?

>
Jane: (Smirks) Even if that friend once lost a sister, ...or is it still cousin?

>
Daria: (smiles weakly) That'll do pig, ...that'll do.

>
Jane: Hey now, lets not get personal about it. So what's on you're mind friend?

>
Daria: Have you ever felt certain that you wanted to take one path in life,but you kept getting this nagging feeling that something or someone was pulling you in the direction of another?

>
Jane: Um,.....no. I can't say that I have. I've pretty much always known that I was destined for the art world, why?

>
Daria: (takes her glasses off and cleans them with her sleeve) I don't know.

>
Jane: (rubs her face) Ok, when per say did this nagging feeling start?

>
Daria: When I wrecked my old car. (1)

>
Jane: (thinks for a moment) So,you're getting this nagging feeling because you killed a deer? Tell me if I'm wrong but that sounds more like guilt than anything else.

>
Daria: It's not about the deer, dammit. (Clenches the air in her fist and holds it to her mouth as if in search of the right words) What if by some chance some weirdo told you that you were going to meet somebody, but you didn't believe them.

>
Jane: Sounds like an everyday occurrence to me. I meet weirdo's almost everyday, granted most of them are at my brothers gigs. But they DO tell me all sorts of funky things, of coarse that's probably due to intoxication, but still...

>
Daria: (scowls) I'm serious, Jane.

>
Jane: (holds her hands up defensively) Ok, ...ok, Some weirdo told you that you were going to meet somebody and you didn't believe this person. So then what?

>
Daria: What if I did meet somebody, ...but under the circumstances I thought it was dumb luck and didn't pay it any mind.

>
Jane: Sounds like a missed flight to me, I wouldn't worry about it. Stuff like that happens all the time.

>
Daria: That's the clincher isn't it, that same person is still around and no matter what I do we keep running into each other by pure chance.

>
Jane: This guy isn't stalking you or something is he?

>
Daria: No, nothing like that. I have no doubts that these are completely random meetings, but every time we meet something happens. Something really subtle, something that doesn't even catch my attention until later.

>
Jane: (makes an odd face) Are we talking about Static electricity here?

>
Daria: NO, Jane. We're NOT talking about static electricity here. I'm talking about a guy.

>
Jane: (her face lights up) DARIA! Since when do you believe in fate?

>
Daria: I DON'T! That's the part that's bugging me.

>
Jane: Ok I think you're losing me here, WHY is this bugging you. Just blow the guy off like you USUALLY do, if you really feel that way about it.

>
Daria: That's what I think every time we meet at first.

>
Jane: But,.... you can never do it?

>
Daria: It was like with Tom, I hated the guy at first but the more we talked the more he grew on me until, well you know the rest.

>
Jane; You felt each other up for a while until you discovered what I had already found out, the guy was an asshole.

>
Daria; We did NOT feel each other up.

>
Jane: Hey, I call it as I see it. The two of you were fogging car windows everywhere you went.

>
Daria: (kicks the coffee table) Alright, I'll admit it. Even I, of all people, have hormones. Are you happy now?

>
Jane: Quite, so getting back to the mystery guy thing. So the more you talk with this guy, the more you start to like him. Where's the problem?

>
Daria: It's the way this is all happening that's the problem. It's all so subtle that I can never see it coming. How can I be certain of where I stand if I can't see what's coming?

>
Jane: I guess that's why they call it "taking a chance". Because you never know where you're going to end up afterward. So,you're starting to like the guy. But you feel really uneasy about it, ...then what?

>
Daria: He asked me for a date.

>
Jane: (leans forward fishing for information) AND.....?

>
Daria : I did something totally NOT me.

>
Jane: (smiles evilly) You threw your principals to the wind and

told him your rates? (Daria looks at Jane utterly appalled and picks up a pillow off the couch and then pummels Jane with it)

>
Daria: NO you freaking nympho, Is sex ALL you ever think about? Only YOU would paint me with an image like that.

>
Jane: OW! Hey, painting is what I do best. OOF! (Jane grabs the pillow and tosses it away) (Panting) Okay, so what did you do?

>
Daria: My heart melted,.... just before I kissed him on the cheek and told him I'd think about it.

>
Jane: (chuckles) Puppy love, he'll get over it.

>
Daria: And then I left him standing on the porch without an explanation. He stood there for ten minutes after I closed the door.

>
Jane: (smile fades) Oh god,you watched him until he left? (Leans back against the couch) You really DO like this guy. (Looks deep in thought) So what are you going to do?

>
Daria: What do you mean what am I going to do?

>
Jane: I mean,... what are you going to do? He made an advance, you reciprocated. You're just going to leave it at that?

>
Daria: How the hell should I know? Right now I'm waiting for the next bomb to drop in my lap.

>
Jane: All I can say is watch out, with your luck it just might be a tactical nuke.

>
Daria: Gee, thanks for the advice Jane. You were so much help tonight.

>
Jane: Hey, you asked me to LISTEN. You said nothing about wanting my advice. And in my defense, this sounds like it's a little to fragile for me to help you handle. I think you're going to need to figure this one out on your own, amiga.

>
Daria: (rolls her eyes) Wonderful..... (Daria gets up to walk into the kitchen to raid the fridge)

>
Jane: (calls after her) Um, ...Daria? Have I already met this guy? (Daria turns and looks at Jane and simply raises an eyebrow)

>
(The scene fades to black and comes back up on a moon lit road late at night somewhere down the shore. There is a nearby phone booth along the side of the road and every so often the intense beam of a light house passes over the tree's just before a foghorn is heard. The scene rotates and pulls back to show Duncan standing in the center of the road.)

>
Duncan: (looks about in astonishment) I know this place, ...am I dreaming? How did I get here?

> (A whisper of a voice is heard from somewhere behind him)

>Voice: Yes.....

>Duncan: (looks about him) Bloody hell, now I'm hearing voices. (Decides to go out on a limb) Who are you?

>Voice: A friend.

>Duncan: I've got friends, can you be more specific? (No answer comes) Look, I'll be nacked before I carry on an extremely vague conversation with a voice. (No sooner had he said this when a shadow moved out of the darkness beyond the road and slowly came into focus as it came closer to reveal herself as a young red head in a cobalt blue over coat)

>Red head: (places her hands in her coat pockets) Happy now?

>Duncan: Aye, that's better. At least now I feel sane. (Studies her) I've seen you before,you're Eileen. Aren't you?

>Red Head: (gawks) My name is NOT Eileen. Ugh, I wouldn't be caught dead with a name like that. (Thinks about what she just said) Oh wait, strike that.

>Duncan: (rolls his eyes) Fine, what do I call you then?

>Red Head : Look,my names not important.

>Duncan: Well I've got to call you something. I can't just call you friend, now can I?

>Red Head: (irritated) Well there must be SOMETHING nice you can call an attractive and popular girl. Ugh,why do guys have to be so difficult?

>Duncan: (looks insulted) Why do most of the women in this damned country have to be shallow, egotistical, air heads?

>Red head: (places her hands on her hips and is about to go into full Quinn mode when she stops in her tracks and thinks about what Duncan had just said as she reflects on how she had behaved in life. She then laughed nervously) Old habits are hard to break, ...I guess. (Pauses) Um, listen we kind of got off on the wrong foot back there. Maybe we could sort of start over?

>Duncan: That's a much better attitude. I think that earns you enough points for a second chance.

>Red head: Great,but listen. I'll tell you my name if you agree to keep this whole conversation quiet. You were never supposed to know I was around in the first place, I'm sort of going out on a limb by doing this.

>Duncan: (looks weirded out) Um,right then. I think I can keep a secret if it's that important to you. It's not going to be something goofy like Rumpelstiltskin is it?

>Red head: Ew, ...I hated that story. That dwarf guy simply did NOT know how to treat a....

>Duncan: (rolls his eyes) Your name?

>Red head: (abruptly) Quinn.

>Duncan: Nice to meet you Quinn. And I was serious, I do remember you. Though it would have been better if I'd been able to hear you at the time, but I thank you for the warning none the less. So what's a girl like you doing in one of my dreams?

>Quinn: Hey, getting a conscious person to hear somebody like me isn't as easy as it looks, okay. And I'm not in your dream, I'm in your hospital room talking to you in your sleep. You're mind is just inserting me into your dream to better associate with me. I'm not really sure how, I just know it's one of those complicated subconscious things.

>Duncan: Whoa, back up lass. Hospital room?

>Quinn: You were in such a rush to get out of that hallway you failed to close the door tightly after turning the knob and well, ...boom.

>Duncan: (takes a moment to soak in the meaning of this new information) But I'm not dead, I gathered that part already.

>Quinn: No, you'd be talking to a completely different person in that case.

>Duncan: (nods) Lucky me then, I get to talk to you. (Quinn shrugs)

>Quinn: Funny, you don't seem surprised that I'm here.

>Duncan: (Laughs) I've always known I had somebody looking over my shoulder. I just didn't expect to meet that person. So you're what, a ghost? A guardian angel?

>Quinn; (returns to her typical cheerful self) Oh no, blue coats aren't angels.

>Duncan: (puzzled) Blue coats?

>Quinn: It's this neat little thing, to sum it up we're all

departmentalized. For example everyone in MY line of work wears something that's this color. Not necessarily a coat though, but the term sort of caught on. You know how it goes.

>Duncan: Uh huh, and....are we stuck together for life or something?

>Quinn: I doubt it, Laura(2) likes to shift people around occasionally to keep them from getting too attached to their assignment. It's a matter of time before I get reassigned to somebody else.

>Duncan: And Laura is...?

>Quinn: Think of her as sort of a district manager. You rarely see her but you're always getting some sort of memo from her.

>Duncan: Ah.... All that is fascinating, but I doubt that you showed up at my bedside to tell me all that. So..... how bad am I hurt?

>Quinn: You don't want to know.

>Duncan: (shakes his head) It's going to suck when I wake up isn't it?

>Quinn: You've got that right.

>Duncan: Gee, thanks for the support.

>Quinn: (looks about) Nice scenery, why did you bring yourself here?

>Duncan: (stares) I thought you weren't really IN this dream? How did you know where I was?

>Quinn: (pulls a PADD out of her coat pocket displaying a realtime image of the scene complete with both people.) These things are SO cool, you'd be surprised at the information I can call up with this thing.

>Duncan: Aye, ..looks like a pretty fancy gadget.

>Quinn: So like I said.....

>Duncan: (takes a deep breath) I met somebody here.

>Quinn: Can't get her out of your head huh?

>Duncan: Hey now, I'm not that far gone.

>Quinn: (smiles) Could have fooled me. Want to talk about it?

>Duncan: No offense Lassie, but judging by how you reacted earlier. You don't seem the type to sit back and listen to a guy ramble on about another girl.

>Quinn: (shrugs) Hey, I'm learning as I go. I'm doing good so far aren't I?

>Duncan: (smirks) Aye, you regrouped nicely.

>Quinn: So... what have I got to do to get you to open up, buy you a drink?

>Duncan: (laughs) Have you got one?

>Quinn: Hey it's your dream, whip one up and get wasted if you want to. I'm here either way. (Duncan smiles)

>Duncan: And what's the reason for that, again?

>Quinn: To give your family and friends a break, silly. They've been camped out at your side for the past couple of days. (Beat) Look, the more you think while we talk the more brain activity, right? The more brain activity, the quicker you wake up and the sooner they can all go home feeling reassured that you'll be OK.

>Duncan: (looks at her curiously) You read that out of a manual somewhere didn't you?

>Quinn: I had somebody e-mail me some instructions, yea.

>Duncan: Somehow I thought as much.

>Quinn: (rolls her eyes) Whatever, so listen. Dream yourself into a bar or something and you can tell me over a drink about this girl you

met out here in the middle of nowhere. (Smiles knowingly as the two start walking down the road together)

>Duncan: Actually lassie, I was just trying to make a joke about that. I don't even drink.

>Quinn: (shoves her hands into her coat pockets again as they walk away) UGH,you've never really DATED much have you. You've got SO much to learn.

>Duncan: Damn woman, are you sure you're here to help?

>Quinn: (shakes her head) Ugh,men.

>(Cut to Duncan's room the next morning)

>(Daria opened the door to the hospital room quietly and peered in to see Maria sleeping in her chair as she had done for the past couple of days. Granted, this time she wasn't snoring. A godsend as far as Daria was concerned. Daria took a few steps further into the room to hear a slight whimper coming from Cheyenne somewhere in the room. Daria looked about the room, before coming about to the far side of Duncan's bed to find Cheyenne facing a corner of the room as she kept trying to hold up her paw as if expecting someone to shake it.)

>Daria: (in a hushed tone so as not to wake Maria) Cheyenne? (The dog turns to look at her and then turns to look at the corner again) Come here girl. (Daria pats her leg as she says this. Cheyenne looks back her again before reluctantly getting up and coming to Daria's side) What are you staring at? (Daria looks into the corner to see nothing) I swear I'll never understand dogs. (Daria walks over to Maria's chair and is about to wake her up to relieve her when Daria hears what sounds like Duncan Mumbling) Huh?

>Duncan: (groans) Oh god, somebody put my lights back out.

>Daria: (walks quickly over to his side) Oh my god, how long have you been awake?

>Duncan: Bloody hell if I know, there's no clock in here. (Tries to turn his head more to the side in order to see her better) Ow,damn , damn, ow....pain...ugh!!!! Oh my god my neck is so stiff. (Beat) Sorry lass, All I know is it seems like forever.

>Daria: (smiles) I'll wake you're sister up, she'll be happy as hell to hear you talking. You're whole family has been worried sick about you.

>Duncan: (groans) Don't wake her up just yet, I was enjoying the quiet. Who else is here?

>Daria: Just us, I think. You're parents will probably be in a few hours from now so Maria can go home and get some sleep. So how are you feeling, besides the stiff neck I mean?

>Duncan: (tries to laugh but cringes as his ribs start to ache) Oh god, don't make me laugh. Ugh, it hurts.

>Daria: (smirks) Sorry, I'll keep the humorous remarks to a minimum. So, do you remember how you got here?

>Duncan: (thinks for a moment) I remember a little birdie telling me that I'd been blown up.

>Daria: (amused) A little birdie?

>Duncan: Yea, bloody thing goes tweet, tweet, and never shuts the hell up. That kind of little birdie.

>Daria: (laughs quietly) Sounds familiar, I knew a lot of idiots in school who were like that.

>Duncan: I can imagine. (Struggles to lift one of his arms and then reaches out and lightly grabs hold of Daria's hand) Daria, can you do me a favor? Can you hit the nurses call button? I'm in some serious pain here and I really need to get jacked up with some morphine or whatever it is that they use these days.

>Daria: (pauses for a moment as if deep in thought) Huh,um yea Sure. (Daria looks about the side of the bed and finds the call button and then pushes it. Daria then stops to feel the back of her neck to notice that the tiny hairs at the base of her neck had stood on end)

>Duncan: Are you alright? You look like you'd just seen a ghost or something.

>Daria: (snaps out of her daze) Huh,oh no. I uh, was just thinking about something.

>Duncan: Do tell? Well, I could use a story to keep my mind off the matters at hand until the nurse shows arrives to shoot me up. Let's hear it.

>Daria: This is going to sound weird, have you even gotten this really weird feeling that made the hair on the back of your neck stand on end?

>Duncan: (tries not to laugh) I'm not even sure if the hair on the back of my neck is still there.

>Daria: I'm serious.

>Duncan: (sighs and thinks for a moment) My dad told me something about that once, he claimed that's how he knew for sure that my mom was the person for him. But he never really went into detail as to how he knew.

>Daria: Have you ever had that feeling?

>Duncan: (thinks) Once, at the pizza shop in town.But I'm pretty sure it was because I had walked underneath the air-conditioning vent in the ceiling. Why?

>Daria: I don't know....

>Duncan: Yea, I hate it when that happens.

>Daria: (bites her lower lip) I gave some thought to what we talked about last week after the fireworks.

>Duncan: It's alright if I'm not your type, Daria. But in my mind it was at least worth a shot.

>Daria: Actually, I was going to take you up on your request. Provided you promise me that we take it slow, I went with this one guy once who's version of slow was just as fast as high gear. I don't need to go through that again.

>Duncan: (smiles weakly) You've made my day, Daria. But I think that date may have to wait a bit, I'm sort of laid up at the moment.

>Daria: (smiles) To quote someone I once knew, "I can consider a hospital visit to be a date."

>Duncan: Strangely enough, I think I heard that in a dream I once had. (Daria looks puzzled)

>(The nurse finally shows up to investigate the call)

>Nurse: Ah, you finally decided to rejoin the world of the living. Judging by those burn I'm guessing you want some sort of pain killer, am I right?

>Duncan: You're a bloody psychic, woman. Can you hook my arse' up? (Daria snickers at his pronunciation of the word)

>Nurse: (Smiles evilly) I sure can. (She walks out of the room and returns with a tray holding a syringe) And speaking off hooking your ass up, it's the only fleshy part of your back side that isn't burnt. So guess where this is going?

>Duncan: No wait, ...I didn't mean it literally.

>Nurse: To late my friend, ask and ye shall receive as we like to say. (Duncan grits his teeth as the nurse injects a large needle into his posterior) There, that wasn't so bad was it?

>Duncan: (as the nurse leaves) You're patients must recover quickly,to get the hell away from you.

>Daria: Hey Duncan, it was a hell of a shot though. It's been a while

since I've seen that kind of full moon.

>Duncan: (Tries not to laugh) Ugh, ...don't make me laugh. My ribs are killing me. (Beat) So you'd consider a hospital visit a date would you?

>Daria: Under the circumstances, I guess so.

>Duncan: (smiles) I'm a happy man then, we're on our first date already. If I could move more than a few inches without severe pain I'd repay you for that kiss from the other night.

>Daria: (looks about the room to see that Maria is still asleep and that there is no one else around) Tell you what, if we can keep this just between us then I'll give you a hand with that. If Jane finds out I'm involved with somebody she'll kick her matchmaking into high gear and I'll never hear the end of it.

>Duncan: I can live with that, Maria tends to do the same thing.

>Daria: (smiles) It's a done deal then. (Daria kneels down and gives Duncan a very light kiss on the lips this time)

>Duncan: Wow, on the lips this time. That was pretty nice, lass. Any chance I can see the instant replay?

>Daria: Hey now, don't get greedy.

>Duncan: (sighs) Oh alright then, I guess we'd better wake my sibling there and let the embarrassing festivities over my semi recovery begin.

>Daria: Are you sure you want that?

>Duncan: No, but right now I can't move enough to pull you in close for a hug so this will have to be a close second.

>Daria: (gets up and walks over to Maria preparing to wake her up mumbling as she goes) And so begins a new day, people. I sure as hell hope you're all ready for it.

>(The scene fades to black)

>The End

>Footnotes :

>1. Daria wrecked the old Ford escort In "Issues" When she hit a deer that ran out into the road.

>2. Laura made brief appearance in "Issues" when Daria along with Maria and Jodie Landon encountered the so called "weirdo".

>Feedback is always appreciated I may be reached at
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8. If I Could Tell You

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV

>
NOTE: This story is the next in the Unseen Phenomena Series, it takes place approximately six months after "Strange Bonds."

>

>
 If I Could Tell You

> By
 Wildgoose

>

> Amongst countless doors lining either side of the hallway, one of many that composed the college campus. A single door opens releasing a multitude of students of varying ages from their last class of the semester. Finals were over, for some this was a time of happiness.

For others the class had not gone so well, and for still others it was simply a relief just to have the class done and over with so that they could put the past several months behind them and continue on to the holidays which were now only a matter of a few days away. Hidden between the bodies of the other students leaving the classroom, Daria exits the class with her backpack slung over one shoulder and heads off to her left, the most direct route to the exit leading to the student parking lot where her car was parked. She didn't walk quickly, Daria knew she would be out of there soon so there was no need to rush. Soon she would be able to rest her heavy pack on the passenger seat of her car and lean back in the drivers seat as she drove home for a month of freedom. Hopefully the time would not pass too quickly, there was a lot she wanted to savor during this years holidays. For once Daria was actually looking forward to being home for Christmas, a lot had happened since she had left high school a little more than two years ago, which as she thought made her smile. In the regrettable loss of a sibling, Daria had gained much. She had gained new friends who in great respect went to tremendous lengths to aid her in her grief. She had rid herself of those in the employment of Lawndale High, who had meant to control her if only to mold her into the image of what they had believed to be the model student, a mindless automaton willing to listen to whatever psychobabble they had to spew in her direction. In ridding herself of that hell, she moved on to a higher plane, one of legitimate education that could feed USEFUL information into her mind, regardless of how expensive. And last but not in any way least, she had found someone even though she had not sought to find anyone who could be close to her. Strange as it would seem, this person who had appeared in her life seemingly by accident, almost literally if you took into consideration the circumstances it occurred under, had earned her trust emotionally. A rare thing to grant the opposite sex given that anyone else of that gender had proven that they had not even been worth the words "get lost, asshole."
 Daria chuckled to herself as she attempted to count just how many times she had harshly said those very words to any guy who dared to make a pass at her. She looked up towards the upcoming doorway to see a dark haired man standing in the center of the hallway while leaning heavily on a cane. Daria recognized him immediately, she found herself without even realizing it at first picking up the pace at which she walked to close the distance quickly.

>
Daria: (as she approached the man) Duncan, ...What are you doing here?

>
Duncan: You know me, lass. I hate sitting around the house.

>
Daria: (smirks) So you came to see me? Duncan, I would have been home in an hour or so. And you KNOW the doctor doesn't want you on that leg for long periods of time until you get your next X-rays done.

>
Duncan: Hey, I haven't been on it for very long at all. Maybe,about an hour or so.

>
Daria: You've been standing here waiting for me? Duncan, there's a student lounge just around the corner. You could have sat there and waited for me to get out of class.

>
Duncan: Like I said, I was restless.

>
Daria: So restless that you had to get out of the house and come all this way JUST to see someone who within a short period of time would gladly have come to see YOU.

>
Duncan: Well, in my defense. My mother was hovering.

>
Daria:(smirks) Hovering?

>
Duncan: Aye, every five minutes or so she would come back from whatever she was doing around the house and ask me if I needed anything and remind me to stay off this bum leg of mine. I couldn't bloody stand it any more, I had to get out of there when she wasn't looking and the best thing I could think of to do was to come see you. We don't get enough time together, you know that....

>
Daria: You mean what with our waiting until either of our families are nowhere to be found to be ourselves?

>
Duncan: Aye, Although I must admit. It's kind of fun keeping this sort of thing from my sister, when I pry about her relationship with Trent all she can fire back with is "Why don't you go find somebody for yourself so you can stop worrying about what I'm doing." And of coarse no matter where this is said it always catches my mothers attention who then starts her own inquisition on the matter.

>
Daria: (smirks) That'll teach her not to withhold information.

>
Duncan: Aye, good thing we don't do things like that. (Winks)
(Daria laughs and starts walking toward the parking lot at a much slower pace than before so to allow Duncan to keep up)

>
Daria: Hey Duncan, I've got a question for you.

>
Duncan: What's that?

>
Daria: Have you ever tried to actually say the word "yes" as apposed to "aye"

>
Duncan: What the hell brought that up?

>
Daria: Nothing really, I just noticed that I've never heard you use the word "Yes"

>
Duncan: The latter word just has always come natural to me, I guess.

>
Daria:(smiles) But have you actually TRIED to use the word?

>
Duncan: (rolls his eyes) Yes... (Accent makes it unrecognizable)

>
Daria:(scowls) What?

>
Duncan: Yes. (Same problem)

>
Daria: (raises an eyebrow) Sssss? What are you a snake?

>
Duncan: (irritated) I said YES. (Still the same problem)

>
Daria: (trying to make it out) Yies?

>
Duncan: Bloody hell, never mind. You're doing that on purpose.

>
Daria: (slightly hurt) NO! No, I'm not. I really can't understand what you're trying to say. You're accent makes it that difficult.

>
Duncan: (sighs) Well, now you know why I use the word "aye".

>
Daria: Ok, my curiosity is satisfied then. I'm sorry if I made you mad.

>
Duncan: (smiles) No,you didn't. (Wraps his arm around her and draws her close) So anyway, we'll leave your car here until we get back. We can take my truck.

>
Daria: Excuse me? Where are we going?

>
Duncan: (looks at her in thought) Oh hell, I didn't even ask you yet. I'm sorry love, where's my head. I wanted to shop for something and I was wondering if you help me find what I'm looking for.

>
Daria: You want ME to help you shop for something? Duncan, you know I'm no good at picking things out for other people.

>
Duncan: (smiles) I wouldn't worry about it too much, I'm sure the person will like whatever you pick out.

>
Daria: (looks at him for a long moment) You really want me to do this don't you?

>
Duncan: Aye.

>
Daria: (smiles evilly) Let me hear you say yes, again.

>
Duncan: (points his finger at her jokingly) Hey, don't push it.

>
Daria: (snaps her fingers) Damn! (The two of them walk to where Duncan's truck is and stop short as Daria looks the truck over) What the,Duncan, what did you do to your truck?

>
Duncan: (pretends not to know what she's talking about) What?

>
Daria: You changed the lenses on that light bar you've got on the roof. You're a volunteer, isn't it illegal for you to have red lights on your truck?

>
Duncan: (smiles) I was wondering if you'd notice. That's a bit of a surprise I've got for you, I'm not a volunteer any more.

>
Daria: What? What did you do, ...change professions?

>
Duncan: Not quite, they've hired me as a career. As soon as I'm ready to go back, I'll be getting paid for what I do. Hence the change from blue to red lights, I've even got a siren and wig wags hooked up under the hood.

>
Daria: (looks worried as they both climb into the truck and drive away) All the bells and whistles are hooked up all ready huh?

>
Duncan: (looks at her face) What's wrong, lass?

>
Daria: I worry about you, Duncan. I know that's a lot to say for two people who have only been together for six months. But, you were hurt pretty bad the last time. What if that happened again, or worse the next time.

>
Duncan: (looks at her briefly before turning his attention back to the road) Daria,You know how I feel about you. I'd never do anything to hurt you, you have to know that.

>
Daria: I know, but I also can't help how I feel. I get this weird little knot in my stomach whenever you leave that pager on and a call comes over it.

>
Duncan: (sighs) Daria, ...this is what I love to do. It's not just some stupid hobby, this is a job that I truly love to do. Would you really want me to stick myself with a job that I'd detest?

>
Daria: Well, ...millions of other Americans do it every day.

>
Duncan: (looks at her again) Daria...?

>
Daria: (gives in) No, I guess not. Just,give me your word that you'll always be careful.

>
Duncan: I think I can do that, I learned my lesson the last time. (Reaches down and rubs his left leg before spying the store he had wanted to travel to) Ah, here we go. I almost missed the place.

>
Daria: (gawks) International jeweler's? This place is top of the line, just who the hell are you shopping for?

>
Duncan: Somebody special, do you still want to help me?

>
Daria: (slightly suspicious that he may have met someone else) I

told you I would, didn't I?

>
Duncan: (smiles) Aye lass, you did. (Duncan pulls into a parking spot and they both head into the building) So how do you know this place?

>
Daria: My sister used to shop here every time she had some social event to go to.

>
Duncan: You're sister, the one who passed away a while back right?

>
Daria: That would be her.

>
Duncan: You never really told me about her, what was her name.

>
Daria: Quinn. (Duncan does a double take and wears an astonished expression for just a brief moment)What?

>
Duncan: (snaps out of it) Huh.....? Oh, nothing. (Smiles) I met somebody named Quinn.(1) (Daria looks slightly hurt as she thinks her original suspicion is confirmed) Eh, it's no big deal. Off to the matters at hand. (They both browse around the store for the longest time before someone comes over to help them)

>
Saleswoman: Can I help you?

>
Duncan: Aye, you might at that. What can you show us in the way of a woman's pendant?

>
Saleswoman: (looks Duncan over as if to say "yea right, like you can afford anything HERE") Ah, those are right over here. (After looking everything over Duncan finally looks at Daria and asks her opinion. Daria, still with her suspicion doesn't want to grant another woman something really nice so she points to the most pathetic thing on display)

>
Daria: I think whoever this is for would like that one. (Just by the tone of her voice Duncan can tell what's going through her mind and realizes he's got her hooked)

>
Duncan: (looks at Daria with interest) What are you kidding? She's too damned beautiful to wear something THAT ugly. (Daria starts to tear up at the mention of this)

>
Daria: (VO) Don't cry, don't run. Don't let him know your hurt, just dump him when you get back to your car.

>
Duncan: (looks around and spots an elegant heart shaped sapphire pendant encrusted with a full carat of densely fitted small diamonds attached to a 24 karat white gold neck chain) (points) That will work right there.

>
Saleswoman: (trying to prevent her time from being wasted) Sir,that's a very expensive item and it's already been set aside for someone. Perhaps something else.....

>
Duncan: (cuts her off irritation) Bloody woman, do you work here or what? (Hands her a small piece of paper with a series of order numbers on it)

>
Saleswoman: (flustered) Um...yes, of coarse. (Fumbles with the keys to the case and then takes it out to let Duncan look at it)

>
Duncan: (looks at in his palm and then hands it back to the saleswoman) Aye, and she's worth every cent. Ring it up.

>
Saleswoman:(confident that he will back off when he hears the price after she rings it up) How will this be paid for, sir?

>
Duncan: (Reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a small wad of hundred dollar bills) Cash of coarse.

>
Saleswoman: (says as little as possible to avoid further embarrassment) Um...just bring it back every six months so we can inspect an clean it and it will be insured against any accidental loss or damage for as long as you own it. (Looks at Duncan as she

waits for him to say something) Would...you like me to wrap it for you?

>
Duncan: No, the recipient has already seen it. (Duncan takes his change, the receipt, and the pendant from the woman. He then turns to brush Daria's hair aside and places it about her neck) I was right, it still doesn't do you justice.

>
Daria: (stands there speechless for the longest time before acting as if she were hyperventilating) I....I can't be in here, I have to get some air. (Daria runs out of the store)

>
Saleswoman: Is she all right?

>
Duncan: Eh, she will be. (Walks as quickly after her as his bad leg will allow)

>
(Cut to just outside the store)

>
(Daria is seen at the truck trying not to cry)

>
Duncan: (Comes walking up and rubs his left leg when he comes to a stop) Oh god, I've definitely been standing for too long. Daria, what's wrong? Why are you acting like this?

>
Daria: (scowls) Why the hell did you do that? (Holds the pendant in her hand and then lets it drop back against her chest) There's not a chance in hell that this was affordable.

>
Duncan: (looks confused) Because you're the most wonderful woman I know.

>
Daria: How much did you pay for this?????? Duncan, we've been together for only six MONTHS.

>
Duncan: (still looks confused) Daria, I know I can't do things like this very often..... at all, but for gods sake your worth it.

>
Daria: Duncan, that's not the point. I'm not a materialistic person, I don't need you to spend large amounts of money on me. I don't need you to buy me jewelry, I usually don't even WEAR the stuff. I....I don't deserve this.

>
Duncan: (Smiles) I know your not like that, I never thought you were. But since we got together I've been looking for a way to say to you in a single expression how I feel about you without compromising your integrity. (Smirks evilly so she catches his drift)

>
Daria: (Daria wipes her eyes and cracks a weak smile to let him know she understands) And I thank you for that, I seriously don't think I'm ready. But I still don't think I deserve this.

>
Duncan: (smiles knowingly) Why?

>
Daria: (looks down and mumbles) I ...thought you had met someone else and that you were buying it for her.

>
Duncan: (smiles) You didn't mumble low enough, lass. You actually thought I would drop you for another woman?

>
Daria: (looks slightly embarrassed) It's happened to me once before.

>
Duncan: Daria, I dropped hints on PURPOSE so you wouldn't figure out what I was up too. I wanted it to remain a surprise. For god's sake, Daria. You could have the playmate of the year dance in front of me buck naked and I wouldn't turn my eyes from you.

>
Daria: (wipes her eyes again) NOW, your just trying to make me feel better. We've been together for six months, you couldn't possibly be that enamored with me.

>
Duncan: To me you look that good, and besides. Physical beauty isn't everything. (Points to his temples) This matters more than anything else.

>
Daria: But.....

>
Duncan: If it matters that much to you then consider it an early

Christmas gift, I just couldn't wait to give it to you. That's all.

>
Daria: You're not.....going to do this kind of thing often are you?

>
Duncan: I wish I could. But at the moment I can only afford to do this once.

>
Daria: (wipes her brow) That's a relief, I was worried that you were going to bankrupt yourself. (Daria looks at Duncan for the longest time before saying anything) You.....really see me that way? After only six months?

>
Duncan: I knew I felt that way the moment you told me you'd only THINK about dating me.

>
Daria: You knew you felt that way just from THAT? Are you nuts or something, everybody else has to wait years before figuring something like that out.

>
Duncan:(laughs) I think quickly. (Reaches out and pulls the pendant away from her jacket so Daria can get a better look at it) I had it special ordered, it just happened to serve the illusion better that we didn't get the salesperson I originally spoke with. The whole thing is symbolic, look. The stone is in the shape of a heart, the meaning of that is obvious. I chose a sapphire because the color represents great depth, like that of the ocean and the cluster of diamonds represents something indestructible. (Stares at Daria) Enough said,You want to get something to eat?

>
Daria: You mean your not broke yet? (Duncan smiles and leans forward to kiss her)

>
(Fade to a restaurant nearby)

>
Daria: You know, after the money you just spent I would have settled for pizza or something. Where DID you get the money anyway.

>
Duncan: (smirks) You know that bank over in the next state that got robbed last week?

>
Daria: (laughs) I hope you at least killed the guards for their uniforms.

>
Duncan: Nah, I hated the color. (Beat) I've got some money locked away in cd's and one of them happened to open recently, it was left to me when my grandmother died. Maria has got the same thing.

>
Daria: Thank you, that in no way says enough, but thank you. (Thinks) You know, when everybody at home see's this they're going to know we're together.

>
Duncan: Aye, I know. But it'll be better in the long run if we break the news.

>
Daria: At least I won't have to start coming up with reasons why I'm too busy to hang out with her from time to time. I would hate for Jane to think I was blowing her off, I'd never do that to her.

>
Duncan: Worse comes to worse, the relationship questions will turn away from my sister and point at me for a while.

>
Daria: (shares a laugh with Duncan) Maria will LOVE that. And I STILL want to know what you paid for this.

>
Duncan: Daria, ...you're not supposed to know how much a gift costs.

>
Daria: Duncan,humor me. This isn't something you find in just any jewelry store, how much did you pay for this?

>
Duncan: Enough...

>
Daria: (scowls)Duncan??

>
Duncan: (sighs) You do know how to take the fun out of things, don't you?

>
Daria: Hey, I'm famous for it. Just ask anybody I went to

highschool with. Now let's hear it.

>
Duncan: Nine bills and some change. (Daria gawks)

>
Daria: (Stares in disbelief) Are you insane????? You spent THAT much money on ME?

>
Duncan: Aye, I did.

>
Daria: (shakes her head and smirks) I guess this means that, since when people see this pendant they're going to know I'm involved with someone anyway, I'll have to invite you over for Christmas.

>
Duncan: Well, since my family is away for the holidays, that should be a real treat hanging out with you and your nutty parents. I won't have to spend the holidays alone after all.

>
Daria: They're not taking you with them? Where are they going anyway?

>
Duncan: They left to head home to Falkirk this morning and no. I didn't go with them, I pitched a B.S. story about my leg still killing me, frankly if I had headed home I'd be stuck on a farm helping my uncle tend a flock of sheep and when I'm not doing that I'll be pinched by an incontinent old aunt who thinks that I'm perpetually fifteen years old.

>
Daria: (chuckles) Maria must LOVE that.

>
Duncan: Aye, she does too. Maria, loves my uncles sheep. They have a lot of texture to their wool and they've always been rather affectionate towards her.

>
Daria: She doesn't take the sheep to the edge of a cliff so they'll push back harder does she?

>
Duncan: (looks confused until he finally catches the joke) OHno, not last time I checked she's not into that sort of thing. But she IS into the fact that Trent went with them.

>
Daria: (raises an eyebrow) Trent....., went with your family.....to Scotland.... for the holidays?

>(Smiles evilly) Does HE know about the tending sheep part?

>Duncan: (Smiles in the same manner) Nope, he hasn't heard a whisper. It'll be great when he finally comes home, he should have some stories to tell.

>Daria: I can't wait to hear them. It's kind of funny though, I haven't heard a thing about it before now. Even from you.

>Duncan: Must have slipped my mind, I'm not an elephant you know.

>Daria: No, you're much better looking.

>(Cut to Daria's apartment that evening)

>Daria: (fishing through the refrigerator for something microwave-able) So Trent went overseas with Maria's family for Christmas, huh?

>Jane: Yea, I couldn't believe it. Now what am I supposed to do for the holidays?

>Daria: You've got me on that one, My mom badgered me until I gave in and agreed to spend Christmas with her and my dad. And what do you mean what are you going to do? Don't your parents at least make sure they're home to spend Christmas with you?

>Jane: Sure they do, but can you actually imagine being stuck in the house while my mom runs to the local convenience store to get some sort of food stuffs that could possibly masquerade as a Christmas dinner? You have to remember, Daria. No one in my family really believes in stocking the refrigerator.

>Daria: Yea, I noticed that about your family. I always thought it was a laziness thing, or a lack of financial backing by fault of your parents. What did you always do in the past?

>Jane: Well typically, the plan was that Trent and I would always head down to the Zon and I would watch the band practice. None of them ever spent the entire day with their families anyway. And then after four or five hours we would come home and spend the evening eating a so called Christmas dinner bought straight from the local corner store or the nearest convenient Chinese restaurant.

>Daria: Let me guess, your hoping I'll ask you to crash over for a slightly more realistic dinner after your parents are done with theirs?

>Jane: Well, ...SINCE you've asked.

>Daria: And of COARSE you didn't want to be one to invite yourself over.

>Jane: (folds her arms across her chest) Of coarse not, far be it for me to impose on my best friend. (Makes a gesture with her hand as if to imply the question anyway)

>Daria: Relax, Jane. You're in, I just have to announce it to my mom. These days with Quinn gone, she wants as many people over to share the holidays as she can get. I think that deep down she's afraid of someday ending up alone with no one to care about her.

>Jane: Your kidding, right? Helen, your mother and feared lawyer, is afraid of being alone?

>Daria: (walks over to the answering machine to check for messages and sure enough there is a brand new message from Helen asking Daria to be sure to drop by the house on Christmas and if she wanted to she could bring her "friend") Think I'm kidding now?

>Jane: Wow, and you hadn't even checked the machine before that. You must be turning psychic on me.

>Daria: Not likely, I simply know my own family backward and front,and sideways, ...and by any other dimensional feature you can think of.

>Jane: So, I'm assuming that message was a subtle invitation directed towards me.

>Daria: And your assumption would be correct, but don't jump out of your seat if there are a few "surprises."

>Jane: (rubs her hands together like a little kid) Surprises? Ooh, I like surprises. What kind are we talking about?

>Daria: Don't push, you'll find out when we get there. Now give me few hours, I'm about to call my mom back only to allow myself to be talked to death.

>Jane: Since when were you into slow and painful suicides?

>Daria: Actually, I think my wish for that ended about six months ago. It was the strangest thing, I woke up one morning and noticed that all of the screwed up things about the world were actually funny.

>Jane: Why Daria, have you kicked the SSW addiction?

>Daria: Never, there will always be time in my life to watch Sick Sad World. It fuels the soul for cynics around the globe. I couldn't possibly give up on such a fruitful cause. (Points her thumb in the direction of her room) Now give me a minute to use the phone in my room and I'll be right with you.

>Jane: Don't take too long now Daria, you've been too busy to hang out with me for weeks now. I'm starting to get a little lonely over at my house.

>Daria: Hey, college is time consuming. What do you want from me?

>Jane: Come on Daria, I've been going to college for just as long as you have. The only way you could have so little time to come home and hang with your friends on the weekends is if you had some sort of

social life. And last time I checked, Daria Morgendorffer, you didn't have much of one. Unless of course, your hiding something from your old friend Jane. (Waits for a response) So,are you?

>Daria: (glances at Jane with a dismissing look) You have an over active imagination as usual, Jane. Where's YOUR social life as long as we're on the subject?

>Jane: Oh I gave up on that a while ago, for some strange reason the only guys I seem to attract are backstabbing jerks and other women who say I give off gay vibes. (Shrugs) Who knew?
But, I figure if there's a guy out there for me then we'll just have to run into each other by accident. It's that simple.

>
Daria: (pulls her glasses forward and stares down her nose at Jane) Be careful what you ask for Jane, fate has a funny sense of humor these days.

>
Jane: Since when did you start believing in fate?

>
Daria: I don't, but who says fate can't believe in me?

>
Jane: Interesting point, amiga. Now hurry up and make your phone call, so we can get back to our meaningless existence. Besides, I 'm starving and I intend to raid your fridge while your back is turned.

>
Daria: Yea, yea....keep your shorts on.

>
Jane: (Pulls the waist line of her pants away from her body to take a peek as Daria walks away) Grey boxers, I'll be damned my shorts are still there. (Shrugs) I guess the underpants Gnomes haven't been seen in the neighborhood lately. (Looks about to see that Daria has already left the room) Damn, I wasted a perfectly good joke in an empty room. (Shakes her head and then turns to walk into the kitchen to open the fridge) Oh look, a stocked refrigerator. Now there's something you don't see everyday. (Starts pulling out some cold cuts)

>
(Cut to Daria's room)

>
(Helen's voice can be heard in the background as Daria holds the earpiece away from her ear)

>
Daria: Yea mom, I already told you I would be over for dinner.

>
Helen: Oh Daria, I'm so glad to hear that. You haven't stopped in more than twice since you left home and that was to pick up a few things you had forgotten to take with you. I got the feeling that you'd been avoiding us or something.

>
Daria: (V.O.) Gee, I can't imagine where you could POSSIBLY get a feeling like THAT from? (Out loud) No, of course I haven't been avoiding you. I've just been really busy lately, that's all. Even Jane hasn't seen me all that much.

>
Helen: Well, no matter. I'm just glad to hear that your coming over, your father has missed you.

>
Daria: He's not acting like I died too is he?

>
Helen: (sternly) That's NOT funny, Daria. Your father just has his own ways of missing someone, and if Jake wants to stare at pictures of you and think of all of your accomplishments then so be it.

>
Daria: WHAT accomplishments? All I did is survive high school and manage to pick a halfway decent college to put myself through.

>
Helen: Daria, must you be so negative? You were accepted to almost every college you applied to, if that's not a significant accomplishment then I don't know what is.

>
Daria: (V.O.) Putting the world under my absolute control and executing all the idiots one at a time for my own personal amusement?

(Out loud) Gee mom, you've got me on that one. But why don't you and dad save all the "you've accomplished a lot" speeches for when I actually graduate college and maybe get myself somewhere in life. In the meantime, just accept me for who I am now and be grateful I'm around to be appreciated at all, or at least that I'm coming over for Christmas.

>
Helen: (sighs) All right, Daria. If it means that much to you I'll lay off the proud parent talk for now. (Beat) Have you asked your friend Jane if she'll be joining us for dinner?

>
Daria: Yes, I asked Jane if she would join us for dinner.

>
Helen: (hopefully) And?

>
Daria: And what? She accepted, what did you think she was going to do? Trent went to Scotland with his girlfriend and she's going to be stuck at home with her parents. For her that's just as good as spending Christmas all by herself.

>
Helen: Trent went overseas? You never told me about that?

>
Daria: (V.O.) That's because I just found out myself. (Out loud) Really, I could have sworn I mentioned it to you. It's not like you to forget something like that, mom. (Smirks) They say the mind is the first to go at your age, maybe you should get yourself checked out or something.

>
Helen: Daria, what do you mean at my age. I'm not that old YET.

>
Daria: I dunno, mom. I was starting to see some gray hairs the last time I saw you. That sounds like old age creeping in to me.

>
Helen: (turns to look herself over in a mirror) Daria, honestly I don't know where you come up with these things. (Sighs) Listen, I've got to go. I'll see you and your friend for Christmas dinner then?

>
Daria: Yea, we'll be there. Oh, ...and before you hang up. I may be bringing one other friend with me for dinner.

>
Helen: Daria, did you actually make a friend at college? I KNEW you could be more social if you really put some effort into it, way to go sweetie.

>
Daria: Mom, I didn't make any new friends at college. Well, none that I would want to know where I lived at least.

>
Helen: (oblivious) That's fabulous sweetie, We'll see you all Sunday then. OH, and there's one more thing. Jodie Landon called here looking for you, I thought about giving her your new phone number but I wasn't sure if you would want me giving it out. Instead I took her phone number and told her I would pass it along when I talked to you.

>
Daria: Thanks mom, let me get a pen and paper. (Grabs the necessary items and scribbles down the number before hanging up the phone) (Daria comes out of her bedroom to see Jane in Daria's recliner munching on some chips) Ah, I see you've made yourself at home. Can I get you my slippers as well as long as your taking over my apartment?

>
Jane: Oh, no need to bother. I'm perfectly comfortable as it is. (Smiles as she see's that Daria is irritated by this) Oh chill, I'll move and don't worry about crumbs. I can be a very tidy person when my life is on the line,... as I feel it is now.

>
Daria: Good, as long as you know.

>
Jane: So did you talk to your mom or what?

>
Daria: (rolls her eyes) No, I sat there and played with myself on my bed while you pigged out on my recliner.

>
Jane: Well, at least you enjoyed yourself. At any rate, given that your still breathing I can see that you weren't talked to death by your mother. So I guess all is well then?

>
Daria: Oh yea, she can't wait to see us. I guess she just likes the idea of having a full house again.

>
Jane: At least for one day out of the year. It creates the illusion that she's actually still useful.

>
Daria: All I know is that as long as she's happy, she leaves me alone. And then all can be right with the world.

>
Jane: Sounds like a cool deal to me.

>
Daria: Yea, and there's something else too. Jodie decided to drop my mom a line while looking for me.

>
Jane: No kidding, what did she want?

>
Daria: You've got me, but it should be nothing short of interesting to find out. I managed to get her phone number. (Proceeds to the phone in the living room and dials the number Helen provided. After a short time Jodie picks up on the other end)

>
Jodie: Hello?

>
Daria: Hey Jodie, my mom said that you called.

>
Jodie: Oh hey, Daria. Yea, I wanted to get your mailing address.

>
Daria: Let me guess, your planning some sort of high school reunion a couple of years ahead of time.

>
Jodie: Not quite, Daria. I wanted to send you a wedding invitation.

>
Daria: (surprised) You're getting married?

>
Jane: (in the background) What,somebodies getting married?

>
Jodie: Yea,next October. I haven't sent any of the invitations out yet though, I wanted to wait until I had every bodies addresses so that when I finally sent them out they would all be received at about the same time.

>
Daria: That way everyone responds at about the same time thus cutting down on the hassle of having to constantly amend the guest list. Jodie, you should go into business as a professional event planner.

>
Jane: (in the background) She hasn't started planning her own funeral yet has she?

>
Jodie: What was that?

>
Daria: Don't mind Jane, she gouged herself on chips earlier so I doubt if she's in her right mind.

>
Jane: (in the background) HEY!! (Jodie can be heard laughing over the phone)

>
Jodie: Tell her I said Hi for me when you get off the phone.

>
Daria: No problem, so I assume your getting hitched to Mac?

>
Jodie: Yea,surprise, surprise, ...huh?

>
Daria: Actually it is, the two of you barely saw each other as it was. When did you find the time to plan a wedding?

>
Jane: (in the background) Hey, what about the proposal? I want to hear how the big goof ball got down on one knee? Did he try to hike the ring or what?

>
Jodie: Tell Jane I'll tell her all about it when I get the chance, Right now I can't really talk for that long. Mac and I are heading over to his parents for the holidays and it's going to be a bit of a drive from where we are.

>
Daria: No problem, I can relate. Just make sure that you include your return address on the envelope so I can keep in touch with you.

>
Jodie: No problem. (Daria dictates her address to Jodie over the phone and then says goodbye before hanging up)

>
Jane: So Jodie's getting married to somebody?

>
Daria: Yea, to Mac sometime next October.

>
Jane: Who would have thought. (Shakes her head) Jodie getting married. I thought her parents would have worked her to death with extra curricular activities before she would have a chance to do something with her life.

>
Daria: Yea, tell me about it (Moves to walk past Jane into the kitchen when she steps on some chips Jane had spilled on the floor). Oh for gods sake Jane, can't you at least be neat in somebody else's apartment?

>
Jane: Hey, I can't help it if my messes follow me. Now don't worry, show me where you keep your vacuum and I'll take care of it.

>
Daria: It's in the hall closet. (Daria bends down to pick up the larger pieces from the floor when the pendant Duncan had given her slips out from her shirt collar and lays suspended by the neck chain in full view of Jane)

>
Jane: WHOA!! Just who did you kill to get your hands on THAT little trinket.

>
Daria: (tries to play it off) What little trinket?

>
Jane: Now, now, don't try to hide from this one. (Jane walks closer as Daria straightens up and places the pendant in her hand to look at it) Damn, you MUST have a social life that I didn't know about because it sure looks like your involved with SOMEBODY. Hell it looks like a fortune was spent on this little baby. (Turns it over to see some words engraved) "From across the sea and forever yours", what the hell does that mean?

>
Daria: Hey, maybe it means that I'm in love with myself. Did you ever think of that?

>
Jane: Never crossed my mind for a second, Daria. You have many faults, But narcissism isn't one of them. Now who's the guy, and why the HELL have I not heard a damned thing about him?

>
Daria: Jane, look at me. Do you HONESTLY think that I would ever be able to find a guy who could live up to my standards?

>
Jane: You tell me, aren't you the one who once said that you didn't HAVE standards?

>
Daria: Dammit, I was wondering when that would come back around to bite me in the ass.

>
Jane: (throws her arms up) I THOUGHT were the kind of friends who could tell each other anything, Daria. Wait, let me guess. You're afraid that the same thing will happen between me and this guy that happened between you and Tom, am I right?

>
Daria: Not in the slightest. (Sighs and decides to make a concession as it's obvious that Jane is prepared to keep Daria up all night until she gets it out of her) I just didn't feel like putting up with your infernal matchmaking attempts.

>
Jane: Aha, so there IS a guy.

>
Daria: Yes Jane, you've figured out my secret. There's a guy,congratulations. You must have worked very hard to crack that case Mr. Holmes.

>
Jane: I can't believe this, my own friend has been holding out on me. So who is he and from whom did you steal him from? Hey, is this the mystery guy you were telling me about a while back?

>
Daria: HEY, you know Tom deciding to pursue me wasn't my idea. And I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't rub a past mistake as stupid as that one in my face.

>
Jane: ok, ...ok, I'm sorry. So who's the guy already, I'm dying

to know.

>
Daria: You know if you keep pushing like this, dying just might be what you'll be doing.

>
Jane: (folds her arms across her chest in defiance) Hey, I'll take the risk. Do I at least know him?

>
Daria: You'll find out on Christmas, he's coming to dinner with us.

>
Jane: I have to wait THAT long? For gods sake, Daria. At least tell me how long you've been seeing the guy.

>
Daria: (rolls her eyes and sighs) All right, fine. I'll grant you that one piece of information. We've been together for six months.

>
Jane: Six MONTHS!!? You've had a boyfriend for six months and I haven't heard so much as a whisper? I don't believe this,I'm so pissed at you, Daria.

>
Daria: (looks amused) For what, trying to avoid having to watch you go through your yenta phase again?

>
Jane: Hey, that was only for your own good you know. I just wanted to make sure you found a little fun in your life.

>
Daria: By trying to hook me up with every guy I found even remotely interesting? No thank you, if I followed your advice I probably would have hooked up with every two bit slacker with his own band this side of the Mississippi.

>
Jane: Oh come on Daria, I'm not THAT bad.

>
Daria: Wanna bet?

>
Jane: (studies Daria for a long moment and realizes that it's probably true) (sighs) All right.....Fine,but come Christmas I want ALL the details. Got that?

>
Daria: All will be revealed my friend. Maybe if your lucky I'll make it real easy for you to spot him by shoving him under the Christmas tree with a big bow stuck on his head.

>
Jane: (picks a chip up off the floor, smirks and chucks it at Daria) Keeping your sex life from me,shame on you Daria. (Daria looks repulsed at the mere mention that she might be sexually active as the scene faces to black)

>
(Cut to Jodie's apartment that same evening at almost the same time)

>
(Mac comes out of the bathroom looking for his good shoes)

>
Mac: Hey Jodie, have you seen my shoes?

>
Jodie: (Still standing near the phone) I think they're underneath the bed where you kicked them the last time you wore them.

>
Mac: (studies her for a moment) Are you ok, you sound bothered by something.

>
Jodie: (Walks toward him and wraps her arms about his neck to draw him close) Eh, it depends on how you look at it. I guess I just feel a little weird about not telling anyone that we've eloped.

>
Mac: I know, but we won't have to worry about that for to much longer. We eloped for a very good reason, it relived a lot of pressure from both our parents by living life the way WE want to.. We got to get married when We wanted the WAY we wanted to without having to bow to anyone else's whim., that's what we wanted., a small wedding on our own terms. This whole big traditional wedding we're planning is just so everyone else can have their thrill in helping to plan it without being slighted. As far as anyone else know's, we just happen to go to the same college which is why we're seen together so much.

>
Jodie: I know, I just feel weird about not telling Daria the truth. She's always been good at keeping things to herself.

>
Mac: I know she has, but even someone who's good at keeping a secret slips up once in a while. If everyone somehow found out that we eloped without inviting a soul, we'd have people pissed off at us for the rest of our lives.

>
Josie: I guess you're right, at least she'll be there at the formal wedding. I'm thinking about asking her to be my maid of honor.

>
Mac: (Laughs) I don't know, you told me how uncomfortable she looked when she was fitted for a bridesmaids dress. Think how she'll feel if she's the maid of honor?

>
Jodie: I'm sure she'll get over it. She's one of my best friends. (Gives Mac a kiss) Now go find your shoes before we're late.

>
(Fade into early Christmas morning about eight o'clock)

>
(Daria is seen lying down on the couch in Duncan's living room as Duncan briskly walks past her without a shirt on)

>
Duncan: So Jane noticed the pendant and figured us out did she? Well we knew it was going to happen.

>
Daria: All Jane knows is that I've had a boyfriend for the past six months who happened to buy me an expensive piece of jewelry. You wouldn't believe how hard she tried to dig for more information.

>
Duncan: I'm certain I would. (Walks past her again) Now where the hell did I put that new shirt I set out last night?

>
Daria: She thinks we're sexually active.

>
Duncan: (stops in his tracks and looks at Daria from where he is) Bloody hell, Daria. You didn't start feeding ideas into her head did you?

>
Daria: Of course not, she comes up with those ideas all on her own. But it is rather fun torturing her with a lack of information. There are so few things in this world that are as fulfilling as that. (Thinks for a moment) It doesn't bother you does it?

>
Duncan: (looks at her strangely) Does what bother me?

>
Daria: That we're not active,in that way.

>
Duncan: (smirks) I'm in no rush, Daria. Believe it or not, I'm just as innocent in that area as you are. So it's difficult to feel the need to have something I've never experienced in the first place.

>
Daria: You're kidding? Not even a kiss?

>
Duncan: (Laughs) I'm not THAT innocent, I've kissed a few girls here and there. I've had girl friends throughout my adolescence, granted none of those relationships were for very long. They wanted a relationship for all the wrong reasons so I was forced to enforce my principals and toss them to the wind.

>
Daria: Reasons such as?

>
Duncan: You know them as well as I do, Daria. Just to enhance their social status, or to prove to their peers that they are attractive and popular and can get cute guys, that sort of thing.

>
Daria: They have women like that in Scotland?

>
Duncan: A few, no where near like over here though. I can't stand most of the women over here, they all talk to much and care only about themselves.

>
Daria: And what about me?

>
Duncan: (finds his shirt and throws it on) Need you ask, Daria? I sought YOU out, that should pretty much tell you everything.

>
Daria; Well, you didn't really seek me out so to speak. We sort of justcrossed paths.

>
Duncan: (sits down next to her on the couch) Well, however you want to look at it. I'm just happy that we did.

>
Daria: (pauses to think before changing the subject) So, are you ready to meet the folks?

>
Duncan: As long as they don't augment the questioning with Chinese water torture then I should be fine. I'm used to such questions, I would get them all the time from my mother whenever there was the slightest hint that I might have a girlfriend.

>
Daria; So I guess the fact that your parents are over seas works to our advantage then, huh?

>
Duncan: Until they come home, yes. After that it's open season on us.

>
Daria; We'd better stock up on decoys then, I don't want to get shot down on the first line of questioning now do I.

>
Duncan: Better bring chaff and flares instead, when my mom starts firing away with the questions she can be so to the point you'd think she had a laser designator. (reverts to the previous subject) Well, it's comforting to know that you're not bothered by it either.

>
Daria; You mean being questioned by your mother, or are we talking about the other thing again.

>
Duncan: The other thing.

>
Daria; (sighs) Well,in all honesty I'm perfectly comfortable with remaining abstinent.

>
Duncan: (pretends to wipe his brow) Well, that's a load off my...

>
Daria; (cuts him off and turns to look at Duncan indirectly) But,... I do find myself wondering about fooling around once in a while. Like I admitted to Jane once, even I have hormones. I hate to admit it, but It's become increasingly harder to deny them as of late. (Looks at Duncan who is hanging on her words) Don't get your hopes up, I just said I thought about it once in a while. I didn't imply that I was ready to jump in the shower with you or anything.

>
Duncan; Wouldn't think of it, lass. (Daria smiles as Duncan starts to walk away toward the kitchen and the thought of Trent and Maria sitting on Jane's bed after Trent had been asked to move his hand, popped into her mind prompting an awkward request) (2)

>
Daria: (awkward tone in her voice) But before you go to feed your face,I was wondering if you could do something for me.

>
Duncan: (turns to face her) Anything, Name it.

>
Daria: (blushing) I can't help but be curious... about us, I mean we've never even talked about what's beyond kissing and well.....I was curious to know what it's like to be touched,like that.

>
Duncan: (caught off guard and clears his throat) Um.....how do you mean?

>
Daria: (looks him in the eyes) I.....want you to touch me. Um....nothing frisky, just.....keep it above the waist.

>
Duncan: (uneasy) Are you sure about that? I mean.....

>
Daria: No not really,but I'd at least like to say that I tried something like that before returning to my right mind .

>
Duncan: Just like that? (Duncan shakes his head) NO! (walks up, pulls her up from the couch and wraps Daria in his arms and turns her around so her head rests against his shoulder) I don't think I could ever just handle you like that, I respect you far too much. But as far as general fooling around is concerned.... then your wish is my command, lass. In fact, I was afraid you'd NEVER ask. (Smiles evilly And gives her a kiss at the base of each side of her neck)

>
Daria: Mmm....I think I think your proposition is much more comfortable than mine. Thanks for letting me out of it. (Daria smiles as he kisses her neck and Duncan changes the subject to further take her mind off her previous suggestion) So I wonder how Trent's doing with my family? (Daria Chuckles at this thought as they both fall back onto the couch with Daria landing in Duncan's lap)

>
(The scene blurs and comes back into focus on a small farm just outside of Falkirk Scotland. It is late in the afternoon here as that part of the world is several hours ahead of the US. Maria is seen standing next to a wide and slowly moving brook at the edge of a field full of tall grasses that have long since turned brown from the weather. Cheyenne, since Maria let go of the leash and gave instructions for her to mind the sheep in the field, has been running non stop around the field occasionally barking at an animal that had wandered where it wasn't supposed to. The dog still returns to Maria's side every ten minutes or so to mind her primary duties. After a long while, Trent comes stumbling through the tall grass in search of Maria)

>
Trent: Oh MAN, how can you manage to find your way through this stuff? It's hard enough for a person who can see.

>
Maria: (turns in the direction of Trent's voice and laughs) Oh Trent, this was my favorite spot when I was a kid. I used to wander away from my parents whenever they brought me over to visit my uncle, I know the way by heart tall grass or no. And if you're standing where I think you are then about ten paces to your left there's a narrow trail that leads all the way back up to the house.

>
Trent: You have to be kidding, ...you know this place THAT well? You left when you were five, I thought you said.

>
Maria: I did, Trent. But you can't possibly believe that my family doesn't return every now and again to visit.

>
Trent: No, I guess not. (Walks over to where she indicated and sure enough there is a trail. It's not as clearly defined as Maria had made it out to be but never the less, it was there.) I don't believe this, all that time I was walking blindly through the grass and there was a trail right near by.

>
Maria: Hey, it's no big deal. At least now you know how to find your way back. But as long as your down here, wish me a Merry Christmas and give me a big squeeze. (Holds her arms out for a hug)

>
Trent: Hmm, Gotta hear the accent first. (Maria drops her arms as if to say "again?") You know I love it when you talk like that.

>
Maria: (smiles and speaks in her native accent) C'mere an give me a hug before my parents get ye' all nacked tonight at dinner.

>
Trent: (walks forward an gives her a stiff hug as well as a long passionate kiss) Now that's the good stuff. (Trent is surprised when Maria pushes him so that he falls on his back and even more so when

she finds her way to him and straddles his lap)

>
Maria: So tell me, as long as your pinned. What do you think of the farm?

>
Trent: It's cool, I can't say that I could really get used to the idea of being woken up by a crowing rooster in the morning or being asked to haul hay and feed out to the animals each morning and night. But having a job has actually allowed me to get used to being up in the morning, so it wasn't all THAT bad. I just wouldn't want to do it for a living. (Thinks for a moment) Hey Maria,Has your family said anything about me? You know, if they like me or not.

>
Maria: Trent, my parents love you, You know that.

>
Trent: I know, but what about your other relatives?

>
Maria: My uncle Nigel,he hasn't really said anything except that you and I together are bound to eat us all out of house and home before long. And my Aunt Grace,I don't know. She's almost impossible to get a read on. One minute you could swear she's got it in for you and the next she'll turn around and do something really sweet for you.

>
Trent: Yea, that sort of dawned on me this morning at breakfast when she asked if I'd slept with you yet. I never thought I could turn that shade of red.

>
Maria: (bursts out laughing) Yea, I'm pretty sure she did that on purpose too. It's a good thing you finally told her no, or she would have actually begun to wonder. Especially since they let us sleep in the same room because of a lack of space,and heat in the barn.

>
Trent: That would have sucked,no heat.

>
Maria: So you wouldn't have minded sleeping in the loft would you?

>
Trent: I've woke up in worse places, it wouldn't be such a big deal if didn't get so cold at night here.

>
Maria: It's winter, Trent. What do you want?

>
Trent: (Smiles and sits up with Maria still in his lap) I want YOU. (Gives her a kiss)

>
Maria: And if you play your cards right, you'll have me. Just not right now, it's Christmas and we're at my uncles house. Just be patient and things will come about eventually.

>
Trent: I can live with that. (Maria rolls off of him and lies flat on her back)

>
Maria: I love listening to the brook, sometimes it almost sounds like it's speaking to me.

>
Trent: (smiles jokingly) Are you sure that isn't the little Leprechauns in the woods or something?

>
Maria: That's Ireland you twit. We're in Scotland, we're famous for having rain most of the year and having the loch ness monster show up in the pond behind your house.

>
Trent: Oh yea, I get the two countries mixed up once in a while. (Pauses and looks at Maria) So....do you think that we'll ever end up together?

>
Maria: You're not going to propose to me out her in the field are you?

>
Trent: Oh...no, no, that's not what I was getting at. I didn't mean to mislead you.

>
Maria: Relax Trent, it was a joke. But it IS a nice thought.

>
Trent: I meant, do you think we'll eventually end up together.

>
Maria: (doesn't answer for several minutes) I'd like to think

so, but hopefully we've both got a long life ahead of us so I wouldn't put any rush into it. It warms my heart to know you're thinking about me in that way though. It really does, Trent. (Rolls on her side to face Trent and draws him close for another long kiss)

>
(A call is heard from somewhere in the field from maria's father)

>
Michael Macleod: Maria, ...Trent. Supper'll be ready soon, hurry up and join the clan around the table.

>
Maria: (loudly) We'll be there, dad. (To Trent) I guess we'd better head in then.

>
Trent: I guess so, we still need to eat them all out of house and home. (Maria laughs and then calls Cheyenne to her side and takes the leash just before they both walk back to the house.)

>
Maria: I wonder if Aunt Grace is making haggis.

>
Trent: What the hell is haggis?

>
Maria: (smirks) You don't want to know. It's an acquired taste so if it gets shoved onto your plate then just eat it without asking questions. You can always puke it up later if you don't like it.

>
Trent: Whoa, sounds like a bad night at the pub. (Smiles) Who's bringing the stale beer?

>
Maria: Don't be an ass, Trent. Scots NEVER let good beer go stale. (They continue their trek back up to the house)

>
(Cut to the Morgendorffer Household around Christmas evening the in the western hemisphere. Jake is busy singing to himself while standing on a ladder while adding a few extra ornaments to the top of the tree, and Helen is busy in the kitchen making an attempt to cook Christmas dinner. The scene pulls back to the outside of the house as Daria and Duncan pull up to the curb in Duncan's truck. They both get out and stand next to each other in the driveway facing the house. If one listened closely enough, one could swear that the standoff theme to "the good, the bad, and the ugly" could be heard on the wind)

>
Daria: (turns to look at Duncan) Well,... what do you think?

>
Duncan: (leans on his cane for a moment) Well, there's no sense in putting off the inevitable. I'd probably have to meet them sooner or later. It's better to get it over and done with now.

>
Daria: Are you sure, there's still time to run if you want to.

>
Duncan: And leave you standing all alone on Christmas, (shakes his head) Not a bloody chance in the pit of hades. But just in case they torture us with chit chat, did you bring any suicide pills?

>
Daria: Sorry, the pharmacy couldn't fill the prescription in time.

>
Duncan: (smirks) Bloody overpaid alchemists, they can never do anything on time can they?

>
Daria: No problem, worse comes to worse we'll just have to take my parents out first.

>
Duncan: Aye, I can live with that. Let's go then. (They both walk up the driveway together and ring the door bell in preparation to enter hell)

>
(From inside the house Helen can be heard ranting at Jake to be careful not to knock the tree over. After a moment the screech of a deadbolt is heard and the door opens to reveal Helen in a colorful Christmas outfit complete with a santa hat with her name written in sparkles)

>
Helen: Oh sweetie, it's so good to see you after so long.

>
Daria: Oh my god, mom what the hell are you wearing? Have you been trying to re-live the sixties again?

>
Helen: Oh Daria, I'm just trying to get into the spirit of things that's all. (Looks at Duncan) And who's this?

>
Daria: Um ...mom, I told you I was bringing another friend, remember?

>
Helen: Of course I remember, my mind is still as sharp as it ever was regardless of what games you may play with me over the phone. I was looking for something in the way of a NAME?

>
Duncan: (responds before Daria does) Mrs. Morgendorffer,I'm Duncan Macleod. (Shakes hands with Helen)

>
Helen: (Allows them to walk in the door past her and then closes it behind them) Duncan, ...it's nice to meet you. So how do you two know each other?

>
Daria: (reluctantly) Mom,Duncan's my significant other.

>
Helen: Significant other....., OH sweetie. You've got a boyfriend?

>
Daria: (looks nauseated) Yea,I guess you could call him that.

>
Jake: (still up on the ladder turns suddenly) What,Daria's met a guy? (Jake's sudden turn shifts the balance of the ladder and after wobbling a few times sends him falling into the tree and bringing it crashing to the floor along with him sending ornaments sprawling across the floor)

>
Helen: (turns to watch the commotion and pinches her sinuses) Oh Jake,for gods sake.

>
Jake: Dammit, Why can't they make these things more stable. How are you supposed to add all the decorations if you can't reach the top without tipping the damned thing over! Dammit again!

>
Daria: (turns to Duncan) Hey, maybe this won't be so bad after all.

>
Duncan: I have to admit, it's gotten off to an interesting start so far.

>
Helen: Jake, just pick the tree up later. Daria's brought someone over for dinner. (Turns to Duncan and laughs nervously) Don't mind him, he's.....almost harmless. (Jake gets up and dusts himself off before coming over to meet Duncan)

>
Jake: Jake Morgendorffer, my man. How's it hanging?

>
Duncan: My man? (Looks at Daria) I'm his man now? (Looks back at Jake) That's funny, since you're married I had you pegged as straight.

>
Jake: (laughs nervously) Oh...of course I am, I was just trying to be friendly there. You know how it is, that old male bonding stuff. (Doing a poor job at being convincing)

>
Duncan: Aye, male bonding stuff, right.

>
Jake: (looks at him funny) eye,what about my eye? Helen, ...is my eye all blood shot again? You know how I get when I'm stressed out.

>
Daria: Dad, he didn't say a damned thing about your eye. He said "aye"

>
Jake: That's what I said, he mentioned something about my eye. So what is it, Duncan. It's not all bulgy and bloody shot or something gross is it?

>
Daria: Dammit dad, he didn't say a god damned thing about your

eye. That's his way of saying yes.

>
Jake: OH,..... well then why doesn't he just say yes?

>
Duncan: Oh bloody hell, let's not get started on THAT subject again.

>
Daria: Dad, It's easier to understand him if he doesn't, just trust me on that okay.

>
Jake: But..... (Helen cuts him off)

>
Helen: Jake, just let it be before you go off on another one of your rants. You KNOW what the doctor said.

>
Jake: Lousy Doctor, watch your heart he says. Don't eat fatty food he says, don't let yourself get too excited he says. Dammit, why doesn't he just let me live my own life the way I want to, or better yet. Why doesn't HE live it for me if he's that concerned.

>
Helen: (sighs) Never mind. (Turns to Daria and Duncan) So,can I take your coats, or get you something to eat. I was just preparing some hors' d'oeuvres in the kitchen, maybe you'd like to try them?

>
Daria: (whispers to Duncan) Be warned, the most my mom ever cooked when I lived here was frozen lasagne.

>
Duncan: (in an equally hushed tone) Don't worry lass, if it moves I'll grab the pick axe out of the utility box in the truck and deal with it by my own means.

>
Daria: It must be great to be a firefighter, you get to carry such interesting tools in your truck.

>
Duncan: Aye, it should prove especially interesting if I'm unable to tolerate your parents.

>
Daria: Hey, I just want you to know I'll be behind you all the way and I didn't see a thing.

>
Duncan: That'll be comforting. (They entered the kitchen to have Helen show them what she had been preparing.)

>
Helen: So, what do you think. Shrimp cocktails, some vegetables and dip I made myself. And a few others, I forget what they are supposed to be called but I'm SURE they'll be delicious.

>
Daria: Well, at least she kept it simple. How's the turkey coming mom?

>
Helen: Slowly, but it'll get there. These things take time to cook you know.

>
Duncan: (walks over and flicks on the oven light to take a peek at the bird in question and then at the gauges on top of the oven) I think I'm going to be needed in here if dinner is to be salvaged. Do you want to give me a hand?

>
Daria: Oh no, I couldn't even bake cookies if my life depended on it. But if you like I'll walk around the kitchen occasionally and sample what you've got. (Winks)

>
Duncan: Deal. (Turns to Helen) Mrs. Morgendorffer, I know a bit about cooking. Would you mind a hand?

>
Helen: Oh well I...(thinks for a moment and decides it's better than nothing) Oh...um, I guess. Where did you learn to cook?

>
Duncan: My mom taught me all kinds of different ways around the kitchen, with the two of us together we'll be having dinner in no time. (Daria leans over and mumbles to him)

>
Daria: Do you honestly think you can salvage this?

>
Duncan: No worries lass, I hope you don't mind.

>
Daria: (smiles) Not at all, I can't wait to see what you come up with. (Gives Duncan a kiss on the cheek and walks into the other room)

to check on Jake)

>
(Duncan starts going through all the cupboards in search of various food stuffs while Helen tries to work in questions about his relationship with Daria)

>
(Daria walks into the living room on her way up to check out her old room only to see Jake trying to set the tree back up. As he attempts to tighten the screws on the tree stand he loses his grip on the tree and it tumbles back over on top of him. Daria chuckles as she watches Jake yell and curse at this fallen symbol of Christmas and she walks up the stairs shaking her head at this pathetic excuse for a man she had come to know as dad. Daria walked through the door to the room she had once known as her padded domicile only to see that the padding on the walls had since been removed. The room hadn't really been remodeled, it had just been cleaned up. The old Tv that had been attached to the ceiling had been removed along with the remains of the bars that had once lined the frames of the rooms two windows. In as much as the room was no longer her fortress of solitude, she still remembered it as home. In a way Daria almost wished she still lived here, while her family was intolerable and she was always surrounded by egotistical idiots, it was a familiar surrounding to her and as much as she hated to admit it to herself, this room was where many of her adolescent memories resided. It was almost like a journey into the past as her mind started to drift passing scenes of events and people long gone or who have simply continued on with life and simply weren't the same people as they once were. Daria smiled at this, at least when she was alone and there wasn't anyone around to remind her of the pain associated with those memories, it was actually sort of nice to stand there and reflect on her screwed up family and her demented but still interesting friends. Daria was momentarily startled out her daydream by a set of large hands accompanied by the smell of various foods wrapping themselves about her waist.)

>
Duncan: Hello love, you've been up here for a good while now. Is everything alright with you?

>
Daria: (Calms as she realizes who it is and allows Duncan to hold her tightly from behind) (inhales) Mmm, you smell good.

>
Duncan: Teaching your mother how to cook can do that to a man. I think your mom may be a little mad at me though.

>
Daria: You've gotten on her bad side already? What did you do to accomplish that little milestone?

>
Duncan: I kicked her out of her own kitchen. I'm sorry to say it but that woman can't cook worth a damn and she was getting in the way more than anything else. So I told her to go do something useful.

>
Daria: Whoa! And she let you live. Or at the very least she didn't try to file a lawsuit to collect for emotional damages.

>
Duncan: I don't think it would have worked if she had, the courts probably would have agreed with my side of things after tasting her cooking.

>
Daria: She was messing up dinner that badly huh?

>
Duncan: (starts counting on his fingers) The oven was set to low, the dip wasn't mixed right and she had some other sort of concoction simmering fit to burn on the stove just to name a few of the problems. I think we may need to call in a HAZMAT team later onto dispose of it all safely. Hell, I could go on forever with what was wrong in that kitchen.

>
Daria: I guess we all just narrowly avoided food poisoning then.

>
Duncan: Aye, it would seem that way.

>
Daria: I'm sure she'll get over it. So if things are going better in the kitchen, then what are you doing in here?

>
Duncan: Well, I'm done for the moment. I just have to wait a bit before I can baste the turkey, which gives me some time to spend with you in private.

>
Daria: (smiles warmly as Duncan still holding her from behind rests his chin on her shoulder right up against her cheek) It's funny, it doesn't even feel weird.

>
Duncan: What doesn't?

>
Daria: Letting you get this close. Before this morning the closest I'd ever let you get was a kiss and maybe a hug. What's happened to us since then to make me so comfortable around you?

>
Duncan: Hey, sometimes a little fooling around can tear down an emotional wall better than C-4. (Pauses) So,I didn't over step my bounds at all this morning I take it. Um...I know you just wanted to know what one thing was like for a brief moment and we sort of went past that.

>
Daria: (blushes heavily) Um....it's ok, I found my bra. It was stuffed between one of the couch cushions.

>
Duncan: (blushes just as heavily) Aye, well.....that's not exactly what I was getting at but that's good to know.

>
Daria: It felt good,letting go and putting my hangups on the back burner for the moment, I mean. (Pauses) I still want to take things slowly,but giving the engine a little gas once in a while is Ok too, I guess. (Turns in his arms to face him and then pulls the pendant out from under her shirt to let it hang against her chest in full view.) Thank you for my gift, you really....REALLY didn't need to spend that much money on me. But thank you.

>
Duncan: (kisses her on the neck and then the lips) I did it because I love you. (Daria's mouth hangs open as she searches for the words with which she could utter an appropriate response when suddenly someone standing at the entrance to the room clears her throat and raps her knuckles against the door)

>
Jane: (leaning against the door frame) Am I interrupting something here? (Duncan turns around putting his weight on his bad leg and stumbles to the floor)

>
Duncan: Ow, ...damn! (Climbs back to his feet) Dammit woman, don't you knock before entering a room?

>
Jane: (smirks) I did.

>
Daria: Well next time knock from down the hallway so we know you're coming.

>
Duncan: (decides to make a discrete exit to save face from that fact that he and Daria are caught in the act so to speak) Um, ...I'll just go see if Helen is trying to sneak back into the kitchen. (Grabs his cane and walks out of the room and down the hall)

>
Jane: (shakes her head and smiles evilly after he leaves) Duncan Macleod,I can't believe it. All this time the two of you have been hooking up right under my nose and I was none the wiser. .

>
Daria: We have NOT been hooking up right under your nose. That's too disgusting for my taste, we'd prefer behind your back. It's cleaner and it gives us more privacy. (Pauses while she studies Jane) So how long were you there?

>
Jane: Long enough to hear that you misplaced your bra this morning. (Daria turns beet red in embarrassment) Don't worry, I'll keep it to myself. Your reputation with everyone else will remain

intact so long as I live.

>
Daria: I guess that means I can't threaten to kill you anymore.

>
Jane: Nope.

>
Daria: I'll have to threaten extreme torture from here on out then. (Jane laughs) So are you still pissed at me?

>
Jane: I think I'm more jealous than pissed, at least you've found yourself a decent guy. Who do I have?

>
Daria: What happened to the lone artist thing you had going?

>
Jane: I think it went the way of the doe-do when Tom left me for you. I suddenly felt like there was an empty space. But no matter, I'll soon fill that space with something or other, Just you watch. (Smiles) So getting back to the misplaced undergarment, How far did you let him get?

>
Daria: It was a personal moment, Jane. I'm not ABOUT to boast about it.

>
Jane: Wanna bet? (holds her arms high above her head in proclamation) Let the prying begin!! (Closes the door behind her after coming further into the room)

>
(Cut to Inside the home of Maria's uncle's home in Scotland)

>
(It is close to midnight here, everyone has since retired to their rooms after a gouging dinner and a whole lot of alcohol. Trent lies on his stomach in bed as Maria comes through the bedroom door from the bathroom.)

>
Maria: (feels around to her side for a familiar piece of furniture as a reference to her location) Trent, are you still awake?

>
Trent: (turns over and mumbles before belching from a full stomach) Mmph.....yea, I'm awake.

>
Maria: Bet you never thought I could drink you under the table, huh?

>
Trent: Oh man, don't you ever get hangovers?

>
Maria: (finds her way to the bed and climbs in) Of coarse I do, But.....if you had taken that little pill I gave you,. you wouldn't have this problem.

>
Trent: What was that thing anyway?

>
Maria: An herbal supplement, it minimizes the effects of alcohol on the system. I take one whenever I come over here to visit for the holidays. I hate getting drunk, you know that.

>
Trent: Ugh,yea I know. I don't mind it myself but,oh man.

>
Maria: Still drunk huh?

>
Trent: A little.

>
Maria: (rolls over on him and straddles his lap) So lets see just how honest you get when your drunk.

>
Trent: (rubs his face) Honest??

>
Maria: (explores his face with her fingers and then gives him a kiss) Yea, Jane told me ALL about that. Jane told me how you have real problem hiding the truth when your judgement is impaired.

>
Trent: But,...I'm not THAT drunk,anymore, I think.

>
Maria: That's even better, I don't want you passing out on me.

>
Trent: ok,(rubs his face again) What did you want to do?

>
Maria: (smiles evilly) Ask you some personal questions.

>
Trent: Oh no.....no, don't do that. Come on,not the (hic) personal stuff. What if I say stuff that you don't like.

>
Maria: Oh I wouldn't worry about that, the worse that could happen is we just go to sleep tonight.

>
Trent: And...if you like the answers?

>
Maria: (runs her hands up the inside of his shirt) Everyone is out cold from drinking, so....we'll just see what happens. Maybe you'll get an extra gift this Christmas.

>
Trent: Do we have to do this? I hate tests, I never did that well on them in school.

>
Maria: Don't worry, this is a different kind of test. We'll start with the simple questions,ready?

>
Trent: (grunts) Ugh,man.

>
Maria: (smiles) Good, first things first, open wide. (She finds his mouth and drops a couple of breath mints in) That should help us along. First Question,What did you REALLY mean when you asked if I thought we'd end up together? (Trent just stares into space for several moments using every effort to think of a response)

>
(cut back to the Morgendorffer's shortly after dinner that same evening. Daria has since returned to her old room to search for anything she may have left behind when she moved while Jane and Duncan are helping with the dishes. After rifling through the closet for almost half an hour Daria comes upon a dusty old shoe box sitting on the top shelf that Daria used to keep old correspondence from pen pals across the globe.)

>
Daria: I'd have sworn that I'd thrown this away. (She opens the box to find that all of the old letters are there dating back to the eighties. Daria began to look through the letters individually noting that she hadn't written to some of these people in years. Daria couldn't help but wonder what had caused them to lose touch, there were just so many reasons, to many to count in fact. She continued to go through the letters until she came to a plain white envelope at the bottom of the box. The only thing written on the envelope were the words "To Daria". (3) After a moment of hard thought Daria came to the realization that this was the insignificant little envelope she had found on the couch underneath her on the day of Quinn's funeral.) Oh my god,I'd forgotten all about this thing. (She opened it for the first time since that day, the envelope tore as the glue had been undisturbed since it was sealed. Daria pulled out a single piece of paper with an all too familiar handwriting on it. Daria read to herself in the low light provided by a small lamp in the corner. It read as follows " Dear Daria, I'm sorry we couldn't talk long but I was told that time was limited and there were still things to do. I can't tell you what it's like to know that it could be what seems like forever before we'll be able to talk again. And I know that this is a stretch but I imagine it's only a matter of time before someone even as shallow as I had been is missed. I can only offer you the assurance that I will be around somewhere, and that if you ever feel the need to know that I am not really gone,just look for me in an open window." And the letter was signed Quinn. Daria stood in disbelief) I can't believe I never read that, GOD she sucked at writing. (The last part of the letter caught Daria's attention for a moment as it sparked the memory of something vague that had occurred just last year. Daria thought of the night she drove around town, and saw the mental image of herself looking out her bedroom window at her car after she had come back from the bathroom and found it mysteriously halfway open. The memory then flashed to when she had woke up at Duncan's the next morning only to find the same phenomenon just before Jane showed up at the door.

Daria Quickly put two and two together to come to a startling realization) Oh my god,I've been set up! (Daria hears Duncan's voice behind her)

>
Duncan: Hey Lass,.... who's been set up?

>
Daria: (quickly crumples the letter) Oh....uh,nothing. I was just thinking of when I lived here and I'd glad I've managed to get myself set up in my own place.

>
Duncan: (doesn't quite wash with him but he let's it go none the less) Aye well, at any rate. The dishes are all done and Jane is keeping your parents entertained with some story about her brother living in a tent for six months. Frankly, I couldn't stand it so I came to find you. I didn't want you to get lonely.

>
Daria; (smiles) Really?

>
Duncan: Well, there's that and the fact that I didn't feel like being questioned anymore. I could see it in your mothers eyes that she was building towards another line of questioning and justifiable homicide was beginning to become an option.

>
Daria: Sorry, I should have warned you, my mom's a lawyer. She chews people up and spits them out for a living.

>
Duncan: I noticed, I can feel the bite marks on me Arse as it is. (Daria snickers at his pronunciation of the word) So, was I right? Would you like company, or should I just go back downstairs and bore myself to death with your parents.

>
Daria: Oh no, by all means stay here. Let Jane continue to keep them entertained. The worse thing that could happen is we'll come downstairs and find them tied up and covered in Christmas theme paints.

>
Duncan: Ohh, I love it when you talk dirty. (Turns her around and wraps his arms about her)

>
Daria: Well, at any rate it's official. Everybody knows we're together and the questions will be coming for along time to come.

>
Duncan: So your parents saw the pendant then?

>
Daria: Oh yea, they read the inscription on the back, slobbered all over it and the whole nine yards. They won't let me tuck it back under my shirt, as far as they're concerned it has to be in full view at all times.

>
Duncan: Well, don't worry. That's not what's important, but if it matters all that much to you there's very little else that can go wrong tonight. I mean dinner was saved, your family is happy, your happy, and Jane's been fed and we've grown closer in the past couple of days than we have in the past few moths . Though I have to admit, there's not much that can be said for your fathers attempt to save the tree, but stuff happens right?

>
Daria; Yea, I guess it's not so bad. At least we'll get to go home afterward.

>
Duncan: Aye, I'm just not looking forward to going back to an empty house.

>
Daria: No one said you had to,just don't get any ideas. You've had enough fun for one day.

>
Duncan: No worries lass. (Turn her around and plants a passionate kiss on her lips only to be blinded from the side by a brilliant flash)

>
Jane: (standing in the doorway) Alright! Caught in the act, what goes around comes around, eh Daria?

>
Duncan: (walks over to the door and slams it shut in Jane's face only to hear her give a yelp after the door rams into her nose) Damned woman, can't you read the invisible sign? It reads "room occupied, do not disturb"

>
Daria; Guess we nee to make the sign bigger.

>
Duncan: Aye, we'll just borrow Jane's paints when she's not torturing us with her art. (Daria laughs just before Duncan draws her close for another kiss and the scene fades to black)
>
The
End.....
.....

>
Footnotes :

>
1. A reference to "Strange Bonds", Duncan met Quinn in a semi dream while unconscious in the hospital after being injured on the job.

>
2. Reference to "Strange Bonds", in the beginning of the story Jane was doing a painting of Trent and Maria when Jane noticed that Trent just happened to have his hand on one of Maria's breasts, which she didn't seem to mind all that much. They're a very openly affectionate couple.

>

>3. A reference to "All Good Things", After Quinn's final talk with Daria in the middle of the night, Daria wakes up on the couch in the morning to find an envelope placed under her where she would be certain to find it. Unfortunately she never opened it before now.

9. A Mere Formality

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV

>
NOTE : This story is the next in the Unseen Phenomenon Series, this one takes place approximately ten months after "If I Could Tell You"

>

>
 A Mere Formality

>

> It's the beginning of October, the tree's in Lawndale have already changed color and are beginning to drop their leaves as can be seen by the random leaf that blows down the sidewalk whenever the wind kicks up. It's unusually warm for October and as such, people walk around outside as if it were still summer. All this is being seen from the inside of a store that does it's business along the main street of town, Daria and Jodie are seen pulling up along the curb and approaching the door. The two are heard talking amongst themselves as they open the front door and walk into the shop.

>Daria: I can't believe I agreed to do this. I've learned through experience that I simply do NOT look good in a dress. I just don't have the body.

>Jodie: I'm not sure just how often you look into the mirror, Daria. But if I understand the facts right, you were fifteen when you were a bridesmaid at your cousins wedding.

>Daria: Yea so?

>Jodie: Well,you've sort of DEVELOPED since then. (Pauses and stares at Daria for a moment) What,you didn't think I knew about the minimizer bra? (Daria blushes heavily)

>Daria: (Shakes her head) There's only one person who knows about that, and I know for a fact that you don't know that person. So how did YOU find out?

>Jodie: That's not really important. I understand that you have an image to uphold, and that you don't want guys approaching you just for your looks. But it's okay to show off your body ever once in a

while, if just for a special occasion.

>Daria: Mmmph,I guess. Getting fitted for that dress was just such a scarring experience for me though. It's not exactly something I would want to do often.

>Jodie: That's ok, neither is getting married.

>Daria: (chuckles) I can't picture myself doing that.

>Jodie: Neither could I until Mac proposed, I have to admit it was the furthest thing from my mind.

>Daria: What was the closest thing to it?

>Jodie: Strangling my parents for almost working me to death with extra curricular activities. (They both laugh as a sales person comes up from the back room)

>Saleswoman: Hi, welcome to modern brides. What can I help you with?

>Jodie: We're with the Landon, Mackenzie wedding. This is my maid of honor Daria Morgendorffer and I'd like to have her fitted for her dress.

>Sales woman: (walks back behind the counter to check the computer and the returns) Yes, of coarse. If you'll both follow me we can get started immediately. (The three of them walk into a private room in the back of the shop where Daria could get out of her current clothes and into the dress so The sales woman could mark it for tailoring. After climbing into the dress Daria walks out of a nearby changing room to put herself on display)

>Daria: So,how bad do I look?

>Jodie: The color works for you, Daria. I don't know what your worried about.

>Saleswoman: (looks Daria over and begins to insert pins at various points in the dress) Hmm,I may have to take it in a bit around the hips. I'll need you to hold still for me.

>Daria: (Looks down at the woman) At least you didn't call me deary.OW!!

>Sales woman: Sorry, I guess you have a little more to work with than I thought.

>Daria: (rolls her eyes) Now there's a first. (The sales woman stands up and looks Daria over)

>Sales woman: Hmm,Daria is it?

>Daria: That's what they stamped on my birth certificate at the hospital.

>Sales woman: The dress is rather low cut so you'll need to get something strapless to wear with it. I have such undergarments here in the store that would blend perfectly with that color dress. Would you like to try on a few?

>Daria: (Glances at Jodie with a saddened look, Jodie offers no sympathy and motions for her to go ahead.) Yea, what the hell. It can't possibly look any worse than the last time I had to wear a dress like this.

>Sales woman: Great! (Grabs a tape measure) I need to get an accurate measurement so if you wouldn't mind removing what your wearing now?

>Daria: Couldn't I just tell you my size?

>Saleswoman: (shrugs) You could, but.... with this style dress if you don't have something that fits perfectly you're going to be adjusting it constantly from the moment you put it on. (Daria just shakes her head and undoes the straps, then removes it without taking the dress off)

>Daria: Happy?

>Sales woman: (Notes how the top of Daria's dress has filled out since she removed the bra and shakes her head) Don't be so self conscious, I've seen better and I've seen worse. (Wraps the tape

measure about Daria's chest to measure her bust) No problem, I'll be right back. (Walks off to another room in the store)

>Jodie: (looks at the bra Daria was wearing) You had this thing squashing you down to what looked like a minimum C. How could you breath wearing this?

>Daria: I managed. (Jodie notices the neck chain about Daria's neck)

>Jodie: (Reaches out and pulls Daria's pendant out from her dress and looks it over backward and front. She then looks up at Daria and smiles) I hope you'll at least bring the guy with you to the wedding. That way we won't have to stick you with some loser as an escort.

>Daria: You're not going to pry? Everyone else did.

>Jodie: (Shrugs) I can wait to meet him. Whoever he is, he must be great if you've stuck together long enough for him to want to give you that.

>Daria: (Smiles comfortingly) I already asked, he'll be happy to come.

>Jodie: (looks down at Daria's chest) Let me Guess,HE was the only person who knew about the bra, right? (Daria blushes in embarrassment) (Beat)What?

>Daria: I'm waiting for you to pull off one of those high tech masks and reveal yourself as Jane Lane. (Jodie smiles and shakes her head no)

>(Cut to Daria's apartment that evening)

>(Daria is sitting in her recliner in front of the tv while talking to Helen on the phone)

>Daria: Well she seems happy enough, I haven't a clue if she's actually ready for all of this though. There's an awful lot for her to worry about, especially if her own family has anything to do with the planning. God, what a nightmare THAT could turn out to be.

>Helen: Oh Daria, give her the benefit of the doubt. This is the happiest time of her life, as long as everything goes right during her moment in the spotlight I really don't think she'd mind if her family wanted to be involved in the planning.

>Daria: I guess. As long as they're not bugging her already about when she's going to start spitting out babies then I guess she'll be able to hold her sanity. MAYBE.....

>Helen: Which brings another thought to mind, Daria. How are things going between you and Duncan?

>Daria: (rolls her eyes) I was wondering when you were going to start bugging me about that. (Sighs) Duncan and I have been doing fine, mom. No problems on the frontier as of yet.

>Helen: That's great sweetie, I'm so glad to hear that the two of you are getting along. So how long has it been now?

>Daria: What, you mean you didn't mark it on a calendar?

>Helen: Give me some credit here, Daria.

>Daria: Eh, I suppose. But the interest rate will be rather high. We've been together a year and two months give or take.

>Helen: Any chance of a future between the two of YOU?

>Daria: Give me a break, mom. If I EVER get married it will be when I'm good and ready, NO sooner.

>Helen: (sighs) Well, I just thought I'd ask. It's a mothers task you know, to want to see her children happy and well off.

>Daria: Whatever mom. (Thinks for a moment) Um...you know what, I have to go. Jane is on call waiting. I'll talk to you later mom. Bye....

>Helen: But.... (Daria hangs up) I swear I'll never understand that girl.

>(In Daria's apartment)

>Daria: (V.O) Great, now my mom is going to be hounding me from here on out. How Jodie could stand it I'll never know. (The phone rings and as Daria looks at the caller ID she see's that it's Jane) Damn, I called that one didn't I. (Picks up the phone) Yo.....

>Jane: Hey, Daria. How did the dress fitting go?

>Daria: Better than the last time I had to be fitted for a dress.

>Jane: I imagine so, you've actually got hips this time.

>Daria: Among other things.

>Jane; (smirks) I wouldn't know, Daria. I've never paid much attention to your legs.

>Daria: (rolls her eyes) That's okay, until recently no one else has either. So how about you, did you find anything to wear to Jodie's wedding?

>Jane: Yea,... I just can't find a date. Any chance I can steal yours ?

>Daria: No way, there's not a chance in hell that I'm leaving myself open for any Tomesque disasters. Get your own date.

>Jane: Oh well, it was worth a shot. But speaking of your date, how IS the scot's brother?

>Daria; A lot happier ever since he went back to work, he did so hate using that cane. (1)

>Jane: Can't say I blame him, it made him walk like a tired old man. On the upside though, at least he has regular hours now and you can actually schedule quality time together. But on the downside,how are YOU taking it?

>Daria: (sighs) Not as bad as I thought I would be. I don't have to listen to that pager go off anymore, I used to get such horrible knots in my stomach at the mere thought of him going out on a call when it went off. At least now I know when to expect him home.

>Jane: (laughs) Listen to yourself, you sound like you've been married to the guy for years or something.

>Daria: My mom has started dropping hints about that too, I can't believe this. We've only been together for a year and everyone is turning into a pain in the ass already.

>Jane: What can I say, the two of you just give off that vibe I guess.

>Daria: As opposed to that vibe that YOU give off, the one that seems to attract other women?

>Jane: Your never going to let me forget that are you?

>Daria: Not likely, no. This is the sort of thing that has the potential to last a life time, and who knows how long THAT could be.

>Jane: I shudder to think. (Beat) (Smirks) So have you slept with him yet?

>Daria: (looks appalled) NO! Jane you of all people should know me better than that.

>Jane: Just checking, one can never with you Daria. First you pulled the secret boyfriend thing on us and then through covert measures I happened to catch wind that you two had taken a step beyond simple dating. Who KNOWS what else you could be hiding from me.

>Daria: God you need a life, Jane.

>Jane: Hey, I don't need a life. I have my art.

>Daria: Well all I can say is that it can't be giving you everything

you need in a relationship, otherwise why would you be so worried about how much I'M getting.

>Jane: Everyone needs at least two hobbies there, Daria. You should feel flattered that I chose you as my second hobby.

>Daria: (shakes her head) You truly are Pathetic, Jane.

>Jane: (Elvis impersonation) Thank you,thank you very much.

>(Cut to the day of Jodie's wedding. Jodie along with her bridal party are prepping themselves in a room adjunct to the main hall where the ceremony will be performed)

>Jodie: (staring into a mirror trying to make herself look just right) Why is it that everything looks completely different on the day everything is supposed to happen?

>Michele Landon (Jodie's mom): That's just butterflies in your stomach, Jodie. Suck it in and it will pass, this will all go smoother than a board meeting on Friday if I have anything to say about it.

>Jodie: (looks at her mother unenthusiastically) Gee, thanks for the vote of confidence mom. I'm so glad you're here to run the show. (Vo) That way you can ensure that I don't have ANY fun whatsoever during the course of my life.

>Daria: (pokes her head in the door) Um,hey Jodie. It looks like a full house out there. (Beat) So how are you coming along?

>Michele: (answers before Jodie can) She'll be just fine, pressure is no stranger to her. (Daria looks at Jodie with sympathy)

>Daria: Yea, I've uh.....noticed. (Brushes at her dress) So,how do I look in this thing?

>Jodie: You look great, Daria. I told you that you would, in fact...you look quite different without your typical wardrobe.

>Daria: (frowns and turns to face a nearby mirror) I look like I'm wearing a push up bra in this thing.

>Jodie: (smiles) You look great, Daria. You're just not used to letting your figure show, that's all.

>Daria: I'm used to keeping it compressed against my body, showing it was never really an option.

>Jodie: At least the dress comes all the way down to your ankles, that should at least make you feel a little bit better.

>Daria: (frowns) Oh yea, better to have people staring at my boobs than at my legs.

>Jodie: (looks hurt) You really do look great in that dress, Daria. But if it's any consolation, you only have to wear it for today. When you get home you can throw on something as concealing as you like.

>Daria: (looks at Jodie and then at Mrs. Landon) Um, Mrs. Landon? Can you give us a minute alone?

>Michele: But.....?

>Daria: (scowls) SCRAM!!! (Michele looks at Jodie with an insulted glare, Jodie just juts her thumb towards the door and after a moment she complies)

>Jodie: (After her mom closes the door behind her) Thanks Daria.

>Daria: No problem, but I'm obviously going to take some heat over that for a while so you owe me one. So give, how ARE you taking all of this?

>Jodie: If it weren't for my mom trying to tell me how to feel and act I'd be perfectly happy.

>Daria: You're not at ALL nervous about taking your vows?

>Jodie: (lifts an eyebrow) Can you keep a secret? (Daria nods yes)
Mack and I took our vows last December.

>Daria: (Stares in shock for a moment and then smiles evilly) Why you sneaky little.....

>Jodie: (cuts Daria off) This whole thing about the big wedding is just a show for everyone else. Mack and I wanted to get married OUR way, without a big fuss.

>Daria: So no one else was the wiser,(chuckles) I can't say I blame you. It must have been a lot more comfortable that way.

>Jodie: So you're not mad? That we didn't invite you or anyone else?

>Daria: (shakes her head) Nope, and If I do say so myself. I wouldn't mind going the same route if my time ever comes.

>Jodie: God forbid, right?

>Daria: My thoughts exactly. (Jodie laughs. A knock comes at the door and someone from the church pokes her head in the door)

>Woman: Jodie, everything is in place so whenever your ready.

>Jodie: Thanks. (the woman backs out and closes the door behind her. Jodie then turns to Daria) So,tell me about your escort slash boyfriend.

>Daria: What, ...no urge to rush out there and get the biggest day of your life started?

>Jodie: (Laughs) Remember, this is just a formality to shut everyone else up. (They both laugh) So tell already.

>Daria: There's not much to tell that you won't notice when you meet him, he's a great guy. He's originally from Scotland and he's Maria's brother.

>Jodie: Maria has a brother?

>Daria: Let me get this straight, you knew she wasn't born here, yet you didn't know she had a brother?

>Jodie: (Smirks) I heard her slip once or twice and I sort of figured it out on my own. Speaking of Maria, is she here today?

>Daria: No, she and Trent couldn't make it. She had some sort of appointment with an ocular surgeon over in Somerdale that couldn't be canceled.

>Jodie: Really, What's going on?

>Daria: If I understand it right, she's being considered as a candidate for that new experimental implant that they would graft to the retina and transmit visual images from the retina to the part of the optic nerve that is still functional.

>Jodie: (eyes widen) Oh my god, that's incredible. I remember reading about that in Scientific American a few years ago. I still thought it would be a while before they actually got around to testing it on people though. I hope everything goes well.

>Daria: Relax Jodie, she's just being considered. The entire thing is still up in the air. (Pause) Now if memory serves the people are all awaiting your arrival out there. What do you say we get the show on the road.

>Jodie: I guess it's now or never. (Sighs and then walks over to her purse on a nearby chair and withdraws an envelope) I want you to have this, Daria.

>Daria: (After she takes the envelope from Jodie and opens it) (Scowls) Is this a JOKE?

>Jodie: It's no joke, Daria. And it's no insult either, I gave the same thing to everyone in the bridal party. The Hilton has it's own hotel attached to the reception hall so my family made accommodations for family and friends that would be traveling from far away. And I

added a provision so that the bridal party would be able to stay the night as well if they needed to.

>Daria: I seriously don't think I'll need..... (Jodie interjects)

>Jodie: A lot of people drink at these receptions Daria. I know YOU don't make it a habit of drinking but if for some reason you begin to question your ability to drive home whether it be from alcohol or most likely fatigue from the days events, then don't hesitate to use the room. I just want to make sure everyone gets home safely tonight, that's all.

>Daria: And what about Duncan?

>Jodie: (Smiles) I was wondering when you would tell me his name. Each room comes with a couch that can fold out into a separate bed, that should take care of any moral or ethical problems you may have.

>Daria: (Rolls her eyes) You know me better than that, Jodie.

>Jodie: I know, but hey. Ifor should I say when, you don't need the key then just turn it in at the front desk on your way out tonight and that'll be the end of it.

>Daria: (sighs and places the keys in her purse) So are you ready or what?

>Jodie: (smiles) As ready as I'll ever be.

>Daria: Right then, I'll send your mom back in and I'll meet you at the head of the isle. (Daria turns to leave the room)

>Jodie: Daria? (Daria turns to face her) Thanks,this means a lot to me. (Daria just smiles and then leaves the room)

>(Cut to Somerdale eye hospital)

>(Maria is sitting in a recliner style chair while in the doctors office. There are some sort of devices suspended by arms attached to the chair. Trent is sitting in a rather uncomfortable chair nearby while they wait for the doctor to return)

>Trent: You're awful quiet love, what's on your mind?

>Maria: (without turning her head in Trent's direction) A lot of stuff actually. Basically I'm just hoping that none of this is going to hurt.

>Trent: I seriously don't think any of this will be as bad as that nightmare you have once in a while. You know, that one where the doctor shoves a needle into your eye.

>Maria: (Squirms) Gee Trent, thanks SO much for reminding me. I was just starting to forget about that too since I haven't had it in a good while.

>Trent: Sorry...

>Maria: (sighs) It's no big deal. (Beat) God I hope this guy doesn't take much longer, ...my legs are starting to go to sleep.

>Trent: You don't have to stay in that chair the whole time you know, I don't see why you can't get up and move around.

>Maria: Eh, that's a thought I guess. I just didn't think this guy would make us wait for so damned long. (She gets up from the chair and starts to make her way over towards Trent's voice and no sooner does she make it over to him does the door to the room open just before the doctor walks in with Maria's file in hand) Is that who I think it is?

>Trent: Yea,it's the doctor.

>Doctor: Hello Maria,sorry to keep you waiting. I trust you were comfortable?

>Maria: I'll tell you once I have the feeling back in my legs.

>Doctor: (shrugs) I guess you weren't then. Well, when you feel

better climb back into the chair and we'll get started. (Sits in a swivel chair next to the patient's recliner and starts looking through Maria's file making notes here and there. After a few minutes Trent guides Maria back to the chair and she has a seat) Wonderful, the first thing I need to do is to put some drops in your eyes so they may sting for a few seconds.

>Trent: What will they do?

>Maria: They'll force my pupils to dilate, which is always an interesting experience in itself considering they're not used to doing anything on their own.

>Doctor: Been through that a few times already have you?

>Maria: Oh yea, in several different countries as a matter of fact. I saw doctors in at least four different countries as a kid, (grins) my parents just didn't want to hear the fact that I'd most likely never be able to see.

>Doctor: I'm glad to see that they were willing to do whatever it took to help you.

>Maria: Eh, so am I but I never really got my hopes up. It was always the same, my retina's don't work.

>Doctor: Well, keep your fingers crossed. But don't expect a miracle. If this does work on the handful of people who get it, the most they will be able to see is shadows and the outlines of the things in front of them. That is until we can improve the software and maybe fine tune the hardware itself a little bit. Then maybe over time the visual acuity will improve. Again, that's IF everything works they way we think it will.

>Maria: Hey, it's better than what I've got now so I'll take my chances if you don't mind.

>Doctor: Right then, I like your attitude. (Put the drops in her eyes and after a few minutes pulls over a piece of machinery that was suspended from an arm on the chair) I'm going to take some pictures of your retina's so hold still. And then after that we're going to head down the hall for some panoramic x-rays.

>Maria: How long do you think it will be before somebody lets me know if I get to go through the procedure or not?

>Doctor: That's a little difficult to say Maria, it could be a while though. I wouldn't wait by the phone. But don't loose hope either.

>Maria: You're just full of confidence aren't you.

>Doctor: Just don't like to give false hopes, that's all. (After a few minutes) Ok,I'm done here so let's head down the hall to the next room.

>Maria: Great. (Maria gets up from the chair and Trent leads her down the hall to where the doctor is heading himself and the scene fades out)

>(Cut to the main hall of the church. The pews are heavily decorated with flowers and a red carpet had been rolled down to cover the isle itself leading up to the alter.)

>(The traditional wedding theme plays as Jodie along with her entourage walk slowly down the isle as the guests who fill the pews to capacity look on with awe. Some are crying out of happiness, some are indifferent, this all leads to a free meal later on as far as they are concerned, and some such as Jodie's younger siblings simply do not want to be there. Mack watches from the alter as his bride approaches, he smiles and looks on. Daria along with the bridesmaids are all wearing moderately low cut but elegant lavender dresses, each person holding their own bouquet of flowers)

>Jane: (As Daria walks past Jane and Duncan) (Whispers) Oh SCARLET, you get lovelier by the day. (Daria doesn't turn to look, but instead

stomps on Jane's foot as she walks past) OW! (Duncan Laughs as quietly as possible)

>(Once at the alter Jodie joins Mac and the others step off a little to the side.)

>Priest: Who gives this bride away? (Michael Landon Steps forward)

>Michael: I do. (Priest offers a prayer for the family and then started on that all too familiar winded speech to the couple. After about half an hour the priest concluded the speech and continued with the service)

>Priest: Do you,Michael Jordan Mackenzie, take this woman to be your wife, to have and to hold, in sickness and health, for better and for worse, for rich or for poor, for as long as you both shall live?

>Mack: I do. (Looks at Jodie hiding beneath her veil)

>Priest: Jodie Landon, do you take this man to be your husband, to have and to hold, in sickness and health, for better or worse, for rich or for poor, for as long as you both shall live?

>Jodie: (smiles) I do.

>Priest: Please take the rings and place them on each others ring fingers. (Waits until they have done so) Let these rings be the sign of a bond that will be forever unbreakable, and let no one put asunder the bond that these two have created in matrimony before god. (Pause) I now pronounce you, ...man and wife. Michael, you may kiss your bride. (Mack lifts Jodie's veil and gives her a passionate kiss) Turn to face your audience, please. (they turn) Ladies and gentleman, may I present to you, Mr. And Mrs Michael Mackenzie. (The hall erupts in applaud and the scene fades to the reception hall a few hours later)

>Daria and Duncan enter the reception hall shortly after being announced and they find their seats at one of the tables)

>Duncan: (looks at the name placards) I see they've put Jane right next to us.

>Daria: Hey, they couldn't just stick her out in the middle of the crowd all by herself could they?

>Duncan: I guess not. It's a good thing she wasn't here to witness that little glitch when we were announced to the rest of the guests though. I never thought the human face could turn that shade of red.

>Daria: Yea, and I thought I was the only one to ever wear the tomato head look. (Beat) It's just a good thing no one was paying any attention, I can't believe the guy announced us as Daria and Duncan Macleod. Jodie needs to get her money back on that guy.

>Duncan: That's what you get when you hire a DJ instead of a live band. (Jane Lane is announced by the DJ)

>Daria: Ah hell, Jane's here. Duncan I need you to hold something for me before Jane comes over to sit with us. Otherwise she'll be dropping hints the entire night. (Daria digs for the key Jodie gave her) Hold on to this until we can give it back when we leave. I don't really have anyplace to keep it.

>Duncan: (moderately surprised) Where did you get this?

>Daria: Jodie gave it to me.

>Duncan: (looks at it) Is your friend trying to send us a message or something?

>Daria: (smirks in thought) Not likely, she said it was just in case we didn't feel safe about driving home. She gave one to each of the bridal party just to make sure everyone leaves safely tonight.

>Duncan: Makes sense I guess, But I don't drink.

>Daria: I don't either but a little bit is expected for sociability. You know, the toasts and stuff.

>Duncan: Being the maid of honor, your supposed to make a little speech yourself, right?

>Daria: (points to her temples) Got it all up here. I've always been good at that. (Jane comes to sit next to them)

>Jane: Hey, I was wondering where you two had disappeared to.

>Daria: Just using my well honed talents to blend into the background.

>Jane: And you do that so well too. It's a good thing I took notes, I feel out of place without an escort.

>Daria: You could have asked Tom for a favor, the two of you are still on good terms the last time I checked.

>Jane: Yea, I thought about that too, but it just wouldn't feel right. He dropped me for you, and then you dropped him period. There's just too much history there to make it through one night. (Beat) But....don't worry about me. I've been through worse situations.

>Daria: It's funny, I don't recall any of these so called worse situations.

>Jane: There just have been, okay. (Daria shrugs and decides not to get into it)

>(Jodie and Mack are announced as they come into the ballroom and the DJ puts on their wedding song as they walk straight to the dance floor and begin the first dance. The move about the floor elegantly as if they had been practicing this moment for the longest of times and for yet another moment all eyes are on them. To everyone, the clock seems to stand still as the couple dances their way into a new future. After the song had concluded Jodie and Mack left the dance floor to get something to eat as do many of the other guests while others take the opportunity to use the dance floor for themselves)

>Jane: That was a pretty choice song if I do say so myself.

>Duncan: (smirks) brought a tear to me eye.

>Daria: (gives Duncan a light shove) Oh stop, "A Whole New World" Isn't THAT great of a song. But I will admit, it WAS rather symbolic.

>Duncan: Speaking of symbolism, my stomach is suggesting that we go find something symbolically resembling food.

>Jane: Now that sounds like a plan to me. I'll meet you up at the dinner line. (Jane gets up and quickly heads off to find food)

>Daria: I guess that's our Que, then. (Moves to get up but is stopped by Duncan)

>Duncan: Not quite yet, I was just trying to get her to find something better to do for a few minutes.

>Daria: So,you're NOT hungry?

>Duncan: On the contrary, I'm starving. But I was thinking as we were watching the newlyweds go at it. In all this time we've been together, we've never danced once have we?

>Daria: (in disbelief) What? You can't be serious, I can't dance, I have two left feet!

>Duncan: I've never seen you try, so how do you know?

>Daria: I just know, I've never danced before in my life.

>Duncan: It's not hard, I'll show you. All you have to do is follow my lead. (Waits for a response) Oh come on, we'll dance to something

real slow. Even people with two left feet can waltz.

>Duncan: Hey, you'd be surprised what she knows how to do. Now how about it, one dance and I promise if you don't have a good time then I won't ask you to do it ever again.


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Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.....oh  
alright. Let's get it over with. <br>
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>Daria: (Begins to go through the motions with Duncan, obviously she is very nervous) God, I hate being the center of attention.

>Daria: That's it? I did it?

>Daria; We'll see. Right now I'm hungry. Let's go find Jane so we can butt into the dinner line. (Duncan laughs and they disappear into the crowd of guests moving about the room)

>Daria: (picks her head up off the pillow and looks about the room. The room appears very neat until Daria Spies her dress hanging on a coat hanger near the bathroom door. Prompting her to look under the covers, sure enough she's wearing nothing but her undergarments) Oh what the hell is this???? (Looks over to her other side and see's Duncan sleeping next to her, turned away. She looks under the covers at him to see that he's in his boxers and a T-shirt. She shakes Duncan awake violently) Duncan,wake the hell up.

>Daria: Where are we, ...and how did we get here?

>Daria: Duncan, I don't remember that. How much did I have to
drink?

>Daria; (Thinks back to the previous night and starts to remember
complaining that she felt really warm.) Oh god,I got drunk
didn't I.

that way.

>Daria: (pulls the covers up closer to herself) I've never been drunk before, did Ido anything weird?

>Duncan: Eh, it all depends on what you mean by weird. You gave a good speech to Jodie and Mack, I have to admit you said some pretty profound and meaningful things about them. We had a couple of nice dances together. (Smirks) THEN you borrowed the DJ's mic and announced to everyone that your friend Jane needed a date, and that's putting it politely.

>Daria: (turns over and buries her face in the pillow) Oh my god,she's going to kill me.

>Duncan: Oh I don't think so, She seemed embarrassed as hell for a few moments until a half dozen or so guys came over at once and asked her to dance. She must have toyed with ALL of them until we left. I'd say she had a pretty good time. Don't be surprised if she still tries to get even though.

>Daria: Was that it? Please god let that be it.

>Duncan: Relax, you didn't get wild or pass out or anything. You just did some minor stuff that was a little out of character for you.

>Daria: Really? Dare I ask?

>Duncan: Indeed you should, when the bouquet was tossed it fell right into your hands without any effort on your part,then you screamed and threw it right back. like it was a live grenade or something. (Chuckles) Must have been a fear of commitment.

>Daria: Oh shut up. God, it sounds like I made a complete ass out of myself.

>Duncan: Oh it wasn't so bad, you should have seen some of the people who actually got WASTED. Man, that was a bloody trip. Then of coarse there was the little incident where you shoved a piece of wedding cake up against my face.

>Daria: What the hell did I do THAT for.

>Duncan: Bloody hell if I know, but it DID seem rather funny

>Daria: (nervously) Um....did anything else happen? Anything between.....us?

>Duncan: (Shrugs) What ABOUT us?

>Daria: (lifts the covers so they can both see under) We ended up here under the covers together.We didn'tDO anything?

>Duncan: (laughs) Those clothes wrinkle very easily, Daria. I was just saving us both a cleaning bill. (Shakes his head) I wouldn't come on to you while you were intoxicated, Daria. You know me better than that. All we did was get undressed and go to sleep.

>Daria: Thank you.....(Sighs in relief) I've never been drunk before, I don't know what I might have done.

>Duncan: I could tell, but like I said. You didn't drink all that much, your body just can't tolerate liquor that well, that's all .

>Daria: Why didn't anything happen to you? You had about as much as I had.

>Duncan: There's a difference, I ate BEFORE drinking, and I'm a larger person then you are, It takes more to effect me. But mostly it was the fact that I ate first, the food absorbs the alcohol.

>Daria: Gee, thanks for sharing. I could have used such tips. (Sighs and rubs her face again as Duncan gets out of bed and prepares to get dressed) Duncan?

>Duncan: Aye love?

>Daria: Thank you for being a gentleman last night.

>Duncan: Anything for you, love. (Daria gets out of bed and walks up to kiss him. As he turns around his eyes widen a little as her underwear is quite revealing)

>Daria: I just want you to know Duncan,I'm in love with you. I know I've never actually said it before now,but I wanted you to hear it before we left today.

>Duncan: It's music to my ears, Daria. (She wraps her arms about him, pulls him in close and kisses him. Then a moment later she steps back with a surprised look and then looks down at Duncan and smiles) Oh my god, (She gently reaches down and pulls the waistline of his boxers away from his body and looks down his shorts, then she looks up into his eyes) Maybe soon,when we're better prepared. (Winks at him so he catches what she means by this)

>(The phone rings and Daria picks up the receiver to discover Jane is on the other end)

>Daria: Hello?

>Jane: Hey there amiga, so the two of you spent the night together huh? I hope your prepared to surrender the details later.

>Daria: (pulls the receiver away from her ear and covers the mouth piece) Oh god, you were right, Duncan. She DOES plan to get even. (Duncan laughs)

>The End.....

>

>Footnotes:

>1: Reference to "If I could tell you" Duncan had to use a can while recovering from a work related injury he sustained in "Strange Bonds"

>2 : Reference to "If I Could Tell You" , Duncan managed to use the cooking skills his mother had taught him to salvage the Christmas dinner Helen was trying to prepare. <p><p>

10. Fate's Twisted Sense of Humor

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV.

>
Note: This is the next in the Unseen Phenomenon Series, it takes place approximately three years after "A Mere Formality"
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> Fate's Twisted Sense of Humor
 By
> Wildgoose

>

> It is late in the afternoon on a Friday sometime in May, the weather is lousy out complete with wind and rain. The scene pulls back from the bedroom window to show Daria lying face down in bed apparently half asleep. After a moment she sighs deeply and moves slightly to the side to show that Duncan is underneath her as he wraps his arms about her and holds her close.)

>Duncan: I thought you had fallen asleep on me there, lass. Stereo-typically that's the guys job. (Smiles)

>Daria: (Kisses his chest) I think I did, sorry. I'm just comfortable where I am I guess. (Turns her head towards the window and sighs) This was a great way to end a long day, I'm glad you were home.

>Duncan; So am I, I probably would have kicked myself if I'd missed out on alone time with you.

>Daria: (sits up while still straddling his lap. The covers slide down her back to reveal that she's not wearing anything) Did you want to go again.....? (the phone rings) (Scowls) Oh for gods sake.

>Duncan: (groans) Only when you're having fun. (Daria picks up)

>Daria: This had better be DAMNED good.

>Jane: (Shakily) Hey Daria, I'm not interrupting anything am I?

>Daria: Hey Jane, ...as a matter of fact you were,(sighs) But it's no big deal. What's on your mind?

>Jane: Um....I was wondering if you could come pick me up from the hospital . I had a bit of an accident and I can't seem to get a hold of Trent.

>Daria: Oh god, ...are you okay?

>Duncan: (in the background) What happened?

>Jane: Yea,I'm okay, aside from a bit of a gash on my forehead and a major headache that is.

>Daria: How did it happen?

>Jane: I don't know, all I do know is that I when I was leaving college I went to turn out on the highway and wammo!!! The front driver side of my car looks like a taco,(chuckles) I hope the cops will give me a picture of it.

>Daria: Jesus,It's amazing you're not badly hurt or anything.

>Jane: Yea, tell me about it. So like, can you come pick me up? Or is what I was interrupting THAT good.

>Daria: Yea, ...it was. But I'll come get you anyway. I'll be there soon. (Is about to hang up) By the way, which hospital are you at? I figure I may need such vital information.

>Jane: I'm over at Mercy hospital in Dunnsville.(Chuckles) No need to send you wandering around the state all afternoon is there.

>Daria: Not unless you REALLY want to piss me off.

>Jane: I'm not really feeling up to pissing you off right now, will you take a rain check?

>Daria: Just have two forms of ID ready for me. I'll be there soon. (Hangs up and looks Down at Duncan who is still underneath her) Jane's had an accident.

>Duncan: Bloody hell, is she alright?

>Daria: She mentioned a gash on her forehead and a headache but other than that she seemed well enough to make an intelligible phone call.

>Duncan: (Sighs) Damned people don't even watch where they're going anymore. (Motions for Daria to get up off him) Well, I guess we should get up then. (Daria doesn't move)

>Daria: We'll get there, fortunately it's not an emergency so we have time to finish.

>Duncan: I thought we were.....(Daria places her finger against Duncan's lips to get him to stop talking)

>Daria: We have time for a quicky. (Duncan smiles and the scene fades and comes back in as they are coming into the hospital emergency room to meet up with Jane who as they enter the room see her sitting up on a Gurney with a large white gauze patch on her forehead.)

>Jane: Hey there, Daria. Thanks for coming. (Looks beyond Daria to see Duncan) Hey Duncan....

>Daria: Have you managed to get a hold of Trent yet?

>Jane: Yea, but I told him I'd meet him at home later since you were coming to get me.

>Daria: That's good, no need to pry him away from the Scot unnecessarily. So are they ready to release you yet?

>Jane: They've been ready, I had nothing better to do while sitting here so I kept pressing the call button just to watch the pretty little light go on above my slot here. I'm beginning to think it's starting to get on the nurses last nerve, she offered to pay me if I'd stop.

>Daria: Really,how much?

>Jane: (Smirks) Not enough,my art is worth more and I'm not even dead yet.

>Duncan: I can fix that for you if you like.

>Jane: No thanks, I've seen enough blood running down my forehead to last me the rest of the day. (Presses the palm of her hand against her forehead) Ugh,.....I can't believe this place has the nerve to charge me ten dollars for an aspirin and the thing STILL hasn't kicked in yet. God, I should have asked them for something narcotic. At least then I could rest assured that I would be out of my mind for the rest of the day.

>Duncan: (looks at Daria) Well, at least we wouldn't be able to tell the difference anyway.

>Jane: Hey now, give a girl a break. I've just had my car totaled by some guy in a cast iron boat. The damned thing practically cut my car right in half.

>Duncan: Who's fault was the accident?

>Jane: (raises her hand) According to the cops, anyway.

>Duncan: So is the other guy hurt at all?

>Jane: Just a light bruise where the seat belt held him in place. Lucky bastard, unfortunately the seat belt I was wearing doesn't keep you from smacking your head against the side window. They had to pick a couple pieces of glass out of my forehead.

>Daria: Ouch, ...did you at least get some pictures of THAT?

>Jane: (holds up a couple of Polaroids) Irony isn't it, that they just happen to take snapshots of your injuries for insurance purposes? (Thinks for a moment) Speaking of insurance, I'm going to need a ride for a few days until I can pick myself up a new car. Is there any chance either of you would be willing to help me look?

>Duncan: If you can wait until the weekend then I would be able to help you, but as it is I don't get off work until four. Sometimes later if work warrants it.

>Daria: I'll do it, when do you think you'll want to get started?

>Jane: In a day or so, I want to wait until I kick this headache first.

>Daria: No problem. (Looks about) So where did the guy you hit run off to? Was he even brought here just to get checked out?

>Jane: I have no idea, I think he was brought in here but I haven't really seen him since he pried my car door open.

>Duncan: Do you remember what he looked like?

>Jane: Nah, I was dazed out of my mind. All I remember was punching him in the face and calling him a blind asshole when he tried to move me.

>Duncan: (laughs) You punched the poor bloke out for trying to help you out of your car? (Shakes his head and laughs some more) That's a Kodak moment right there folks.

>Jane: Yea,yea. Can we get out of here now? (Juts her thumb toward the curtain wall) There's a woman in the next slot over who's

been mumbling eerily to some person who isn't even there. And it's really creeping me out.

>Duncan: Like how?

>Jane : (Imitates the woman) Ethel.....oh god, I'm coming Ethel, I've got two things going for me here. I've gotta shit,and I don't have to shit. Oh god,ETHEL! (Resumes her normal composure) She either died or dropped off to sleep shortly before you guys got here, now all I want from you is to get me out of here before she wakes up,or she comes back from the dead, whichever happen first.

>Duncan: Oh if we must,let's go visit the nice people at the front desk and see how large of a bill they want to slap you with. (Jane gets up and the three of them head out and down the hall)

>Daria: Hey, aren't they supposed to wheel you out of here or something?

>Jane: Hey, they didn't see it. I didn't do it, now keep walking. (Daria laughs)

>(Cut to Jane's house about an hour and a half later)

>Jane: (comes barging in the front door) Four HUNDRED dollars for a THREE hour emergency room visit and a ride in an ambulance. Which mind you was the only cool part of my entire day, I liked the idea of people pulling off the road to get out of my way. It made me feel sort of important. But anyway, how the HELL do those people sleep at night knowing that everyone they allegedly help is sucked dry at the end of the visit. The only difference between a hospital and a vampire is the fact that a hospital uses a sterilized needle to suck the blood out of you.

>Daria: Wow,now I can rest assured that I'll have nightmares tonight about doctors chasing me with needles. Thanks so much Jane.

>Jane: No problem, glad I could be of service. (Looks at Duncan) Hey Duncan, can you go into the kitchen and see if there's any aspirin in the third cabinet? The stuff they gave me at the hospital hasn't done jack for me.

>Duncan: I think I can manage that. (Walks off towards the kitchen)

>Jane: (turns to Daria after Duncan leaves the room) So what was so important that I was interrupting earlier?

>Daria: Nothing life threatening, don't worry about it.

>Jane: You're going to make me pry again aren't you?

>Daria: Jane can't you just for once lay off so I can have a few details of my life all for myself?

>Jane: (looks hurt) Do I have to? I love knowing everything about you, it's like seeing my real life alter ego or something.

>Daria: (looks amused) Yea, well your alter ego wants some privacy so back the hell off.

>Jane: Oh all right,you try to be an involved friend and look what it gets you,jeez.

>Duncan: (Comes out of the kitchen) I can't seem to find the stuff, Jane. Are you sure it's where you think it's supposed to be?

>Jane: Hmm,maybe we ran out or something. I'll go ask Trent, I saw his car out there when we came in the driveway so he's probably in his room. If there's any aspirin in the house he should know, he uses it all the time when he comes home from playing a gig.

>Daria: Ok then, have fun. (Jane walks up the stairs to Trent's room)

>(Cut to the upstairs hallway as Jane approaches Trent's bedroom door. She raps her knuckles lightly against the door and when she doesn't hear a response assumes that Trent is probably sleeping or something. She opens the door and peers in to see a unique sight indeed. Trent is in bed sleeping as Jane had assumed and right next to him wearing a pair of jean shorts and usual purple turtleneck is Maria. As Jane looks about the room she notes to herself how much the room now looked like the dining room. There was a small fold up table set for two and a couple of now extinguished candles sitting between the plates of leftovers from their meal.)

>Jane: A candle light dinner in Trent's room, can you get any weirder. (looks on at Maria noticing that her left leg was uncovered from the fringe of her shorts down) (V.O) God DAMN, she's got some long legs. Man, everybody has got someone these days but me. (Shakes her head and is about to back out of the room when something shiny catches her eye. She opens the door wider to get a better look and see's that on Maria's left ring finger is a small diamond solitaire. Jane backs out Quickly and makes haste down the stairs)
(Cut back to the living room)

>
Jane: (as she reaches the bottom of the stairs) Hey guys, you're not going to believe this.

>
Daria: What, that there really ISN'T any aspirin in the house?

>
Jane: (looks at Daria with irritation) Who CARES about aspirin. (Daria and Duncan exchange looks)

>
Duncan: Okay Jane, before you go and flip your lid on us and we have to have the men dressed in white take you off to the little rubber room, Tell us what your so exited about.

>
Daria: And if you can, leave out any parts about little green men from mars abducting you from your brothers room. We've heard about them so it's nothing new to us.

>
Jane: (rolls her eyes) I went to check on Trent and I saw Maria in the room with him.

>
Daria: (unenthusiastic) We're unimpressed with your report thus far old friend.

>
Jane: Oh,did I forget to mention the fact that they were both sleeping next to each other in bed?

>
Daria: So they did the deed, it was bound to happen sooner or later. They've been together for six years now I think.

>
Jane: (returns fire) Uh huh, and you and Duncan have been together for four, what's the status on the two of YOU?

>
Daria: All rightall right, you caught the two of them in bed together. Congratulations already, we're impressed now are you happy?

>
Jane: Not really, they were still fully clothed so I don't think they did what you thought. But that was just a tidbit of information, I wanted to see if Duncan was the protective sort of brother. What I really wanted to tell you is that Maria has a ring on her finger.

>
Duncan: (raises an eyebrow in interest) She doesn't wear jewelry on her fingers, it tends to get caught on things as she feels around her surroundings.

>
Jane: (smiles) Well she does now, (point to her ring finger) She wearing a nice shiny rock on this finger.

>
Duncan: (tries to picture what she's talking about and then it hits him) Oh god.....

>
Daria: What?

>
Duncan: If Jane's not actually pulling our chains then it sounds like Trent did the one knee dance.

>
Daria: (Tries not to laugh) The one knee....., Oh god. Jane

are you kidding?

>
Jane: Hey, I draw the line at joking about marriage proposals.

>
Daria: No you don't, you cracked a joke about Mack's proposal to Jodie. Remember,you asked if Mack spiked the ring after she accepted?

>
Jane: (scowls) You would remember that. Ok....FINE, But starting NOW I draw the line on joking about marriage proposals.

>
Duncan: (Chuckles) Mom and dad are going to have a bloody heart attack.

>
Jane: (turns to Daria) Isn't it cool how his natural use of grammar can make something like that seem so graphic by accident?

>
Daria: Hey, it's just another thing I happen to love about the guy.

>
Duncan: I guess we're all going to have to act surprised when they finally break the news to everyone.

>
Jane: Any chance we can rub their noses in the fact that we saw them in bed together?

>
Duncan: (annoyed) Prying about Daria's personal life is one thing, Jane. If you start butting into my sisters then I'm afraid I'm going to have to break your legs. Besides, you said yourself that they didn't do anything.

>
Daria: (punches Duncan's shoulder) Hey, no fair! Why is she more special than I am?.

>
Jane: (laughs) Well, at least we know for sure now that you ARE a protective older brother.

>
Duncan: Aye,I just lurk in the shadows. She doesn't need to know I'm keeping an eye on her.

>
Daria: Duncan Macleod,family stalker at work. (Jane shares a laugh with her and the scene fades out)

>
(Cut to the next morning. Jane Stumbles down the stairs having been woken up from a sound sleep, it's too early to decide whether or not her headache is still persisting so Jane just holds her palm against the gauze patch on her forehead just to be safe. She's oblivious to her appearance as she's still in her boxers and t-shirt and her hair is seriously slept on. Never the less when she opens the door she simply stands there while waiting for her eyes to focus in the morning sun which is shining brightly against the front steps. Through her sleep blurred eyes she can barely make out the form of a young dirty blond haired man about the same age as Jane standing there staring back at her.)

>
Jane: (rubs her face slowly) Mmph.....you're a little early to be the mail man aren't you?

>
Man: (raises an eyebrow and scowls at the same time) Funny,by the way nice clothes... (Looks her up and down and a little to the side)..... Or lack of them.

>
Jane: (tries to slick her hair back a a bit) Ugh....., I've been seen in less. So who are you already?

>
Man: You mean you don't remember me at ALL? (Laughs to himself) We ran into each other only yesterday,literally if I recall correctly. (Jane stares at him blankly) I was heading down route twenty one past Somerville college for the arts and you pulled out of the main parking lot right in front of me,do you remember now?

>
Jane: I remember having an accident at that intersection yesterday.

>
Man: (leans a little closer) Well at any rate, you and I collided with each other hence the need for the bandage on your

forehead. (Pauses)And when I tried to help you out of your car to make sure you were okay,you decked me. (Points to his left,... black eye.) Remember me now?
>
Jane: (Squints as her vision finally begins to focus more clearly) Oh god,did I do that? Does it hurt?
>
Man: (nods enthusiastically) Yes, as a matter of fact.

>
Jane: (smiles) Good, it serves you right for appearing out of nowhere like that. (Thinks for a moment) Wait a minute,how did you find out where I live?
>
Man: (Holds up a little black wallet) You dropped this on the ground when I tried to help you out of your car.
>
Jane: (scowls angrily) You picked my pocket?
>
Man: I did NOT pick your pocket, it fell on the ground when you jumped up to hit me. (Looks at her for a moment) Feel free to check it, everything is there that was in there when I found it yesterday.

>
Jane: (looks through it thoroughly) So it is, ...I'm amazed. There's actually some honest people out there. (Looks at him) Ok, ...you gave me my wallet back. So why are you still standing there?

>
Man: Well, it WOULD help if we exchanged insurance information. I'd feel a lot better knowing that I would eventually be reimbursed for my car.

>
Jane: (holds her hand up in front of her face to block the sunlight coming into her eyes) Ugh....it's too bright out here. Listen, um guy. What's your name?

>
Man: Timothy Ravens.

>
Jane: Do you drink coffee Timothy?

>
Timothy: Are you kidding, ...sometimes by the gallon,... on a work day at least.

>
Jane: (smirks) Well, you live on caffeine so you can't be all THAT bad. And I need some coffee myself if we're going to discuss this stuff,... so do you want some?

>
Tim: (Smirks) Do you always drink coffee on the front steps?

>
Jane: Come on man, it's too early for bad jokes. I'll make it simple, take a step in the front door so I can make some coffee and still keep an eye on you.

>
Tim: Wow, you've made me an offer I can't refuse. I'm impressed, this is the first accident I've ever had where I got free coffee out of it. (Walks in through the door)

>
Jane: (As they walk into the kitchen Jane starts searching through the cupboards for a coffee filter) Dammit, I told Trent to pick up some more on his way home from work yesterday. (Sighs) God,it seems he only remembers anything when his girlfriend is with him. (She's interrupted by Tim)

>
Tim: Use a couple of paper towels.

>
Jane: (Stands upright from looking at the cupboard under the sink) What?

>
Tim: (points to a roll of paper towels sitting on the counter) Peel off a couple of paper towels and lay them together in the coffee funnel, ...they should hold up just as well as a filter.

>
Jane: (thinks about it and then decides to try it) When did you figure that one out?

>
Tim: (smirks) At work a long time ago, they never remember to order more filters for the office coffee machine. And when you live on coffee like I do, you have to learn to be inventive. (After the coffee is done brewing she pours Tim a cup and goes into the fridge

to search for milk and then pulls out half a carton before turning around to see that Tim is already gulping it down)

>
Jane: Jeez, you drink it black?

>
Tim: Not normally, but I left early this morning to be sure I'd catch you at home. I haven't had my fix for the morning yet.

>
Jane: (pours herself a cup and stirs in some milk before they both sit down at the table) I Can relate, I'm a complete zombie before I have my coffee in the morning.

>
Tim: (Chuckles) So I noticed. (Reaches into his pocket and pulls out his insurance cards, license and so forth, then moves to hand them to Jane for inspection) There's my stuff. (Jane reaches out to grab them and grabs his hand instead by accident and then drags the cards out of his hand) Still asleep are you?

>
Jane: Mmmph.....yea, I think I'm going to need some more coffee. (Squints and rubs the back of her neck as she gets up and moves to pour herself some more coffee) God I hate it when the AC kicks on suddenly like that.

>
Tim: You felt that too, huh? We must be right under the vent or something. (Looks up at the ceiling to search for the vent as Jane comes back with the coffee pot and starts to pour)

>
Jane: (Spills some of the steaming hot coffee on her hand she's using to hold the cup with and drops the cup causing it to break on impact with the floor) OW.....dammit!!

>
Tim: (gets up from the table to search for a towel) Are you alright?

>
Jane: Yea,I'll live. Listen, can you look over in the corner for a dust pan and brush I can clean this up with?

>
Tim: (shrugs and walks over to the corner that Jane indicated) Yea, ... Ok (comes back a moment later to see Jane at the sink running cold water over her hand where the coffee scalded her.) It's not bad is it? That coffee looked pretty hot.

>
Jane: Eh,it'll hurt like a bitch but at least it didn't leave me with a killer headache and blood running down my forehead like this did. (Points to the gauze bandage on her forehead)

>
Tim: (Walks over) I couldn't tell, you were too busy beating the hell out of me to get a close look at it.

>
Jane: (chuckles) Yea,sorry about that. I was kind of out of it at the time. It's not all gory and cool looking like it was but if you want to have a look then feel free.

>
Tim: Eh, that's ok. I'll pass, coffee and gore never seem to sit very well with me. At least not this early in the morning. (Smirks)

>
Jane: Oh give me a break, You destroyed my car yesterday, you sent me to the hospital for a couple of hours and then you showed up on my doorstep wanting to exchange insurance information. (Smirks) The least you can do is take a look at your own handiwork. Come on, it's still sort of cool looking.

>
Tim: Are you always this friendly to people who show up on your doorstep?

>
Jane: Well, the cops didn't bust you on anything at the scene of the accident. They MUST have done a background check on you because they sure as hell did one on ME, and you're honest enough to return my wallet without touching anything in it.

>
Tim: (holds up his index finger) Not true, Jane. I had to check out your drivers license to find you.

>
Jane: (rolls her eyes) Oh all right, one strike against you. But still you've had close to half an hour so far, I figure if you were going to try something you'd have done it by now. Besides, ...if you

DID try something....(reaches into a drawer and pulls out a large knife, brandishes it, and then puts it back) If I don't cut your balls off first then my friends would make sure you paid heavily. (Smiles) Feel better now?

>
Tim: Actually,..... I have this sudden urge to run away.

>
Jane: Perfect, now come see what you've done to me.

>
Tim: Done to YOU? You pulled out in front of me, remember?

>
Jane: Hey, you must have sped up or something. Because when I looked to check the traffic, you were still a ways off. So it's YOUR fault for speeding.

>
Tim: The police report says otherwise, Jane. I was doing the speed limit, and since YOU were pulling out into traffic, it was your responsibility to yield. Like it or not, that's what the report will show when you get your copy in the mail. (Sighs and stares at Jane as she crosses her arms in defiance) Oh all right, show me and get it over with.

>
Jane: (reaches up and gently pulls the tape away from her skin followed by the bandage as Tim comes closer to look) I figure it'll make for a great painting once I get a better look at it in the mirror.

>
Tim: You're interested in art are you?

>
Jane: Artist extraordinair, that's me. (Tim tilts Jane's head down a little with his hand so he can see) So what do YOU do to pass the time?

>
Tim: (doesn't respond to the last comment) Hmm....six stitches,must have hurt like hell. But I imagine the blood made it look worse than it actually was, the face and scalp always bleed heavily for some reason. (Jane picks her head up as he points to the rather nasty black eye that Jane had bestowed upon him.) I bet it hurt almost as much as THIS. That's quite a left hook you've got there.

>
Jane: (leans closer and looks at the area around Tim's eye) Oh wow, did I do that? Jeez, I should train for a professional title or something. Oh look, and I've branded you too.

>
Tim: What?

>
Jane: Look in the mirror some time, the mark from my class ring is imprinted into your skin.

>
Tim: Yea, well don't get used to it. If it doesn't heal then there's always plastic surgery.

>
Jane: So what is it that YOU were in such a rush to do given that you WERE speeding.

>
Tim: I was NOT speeding, Jane. And for your information,I'm an aircraft mechanic, and in my spare time a pilot. I work at the flight line airport over near Somerville.

>
Jane: (smirks) Oh well, if you drive like you fly then I guess this mustn't look all that bad compared to the injuries you've probably sustained in one of your crashes. (Sticks her finger out and rubs it against the bruised skin around Tim's eye)

>
Tim: OW! Hey, I've never crashed once in my life. And if you would watch where your driving then THIS (presses his thumb against Jane's stitches) wouldn't hurt so much.

>
Jane: OWW!! Dammit, you son of a.... (Jane moves to throw a punch and her hand is caught by Tim and they struggle for a moment while staring angrily into each others eyes. After a few minutes the anger bleeds away yet they are still staring into each others eyes as the scene fades out)

>
(Cut to Daria's apartment as she opens the front door to allow Duncan to come into the apartment and then once he is through shuts

the door behind him)

>
Daria: Shouldn't you be at work?

>
Duncan: Aye, I'm on my way there now. I just thought I'd stop by and see how you were.

>
Daria: What's the matter, too much of a man to use the phone?

>
Duncan: Hey, I don't do that macho crap. I just prefer stopping by to see you in person preferable to calling you on a cell phone.

You sound much better this way for one thing.

>
Daria: (wraps her arms about his waist and then pushes him away so she can return to the computer) Uh huh,right.

>
Duncan: (follows her to the computer) So as long as I'm here, what are you up to?

>
Daria: Just ordering my graduation announcements over the net.

>
Duncan: Hey, while your at it can you see if you can find something as an engagement gift for my sister? I'll spot you the money when you get the bill. (Thinks for a moment) When is the graduation ceremony again?

>
Daria: Yea, I guess I could find something. And it's on the thirtieth, ... I sure as hell hope you requested off. I'd really like for you to be there to watch me walk.

>
Duncan: Aye, I'll be there. What about your parents?

>
Daria: I know my dad will be there,and he'd probably find some way to blame it on his father if he can't. As for my mom, that's whether she can pull herself away from her career or not. Hell, she was barely involved in my high school education as it was. She always avoided the meetings with the teachers whenever they were "concerned" about my attitude. Not that I'm really complaining about that in itself. It actually seemed to serve my purpose rather well, it ensured that I could lead my life the way I wanted without much outside interference.

>
Duncan: Ugh, a career mother. That had to be tough to grow up with.

>
Daria: Yea,so what about you? What was it like growing up for you?

>
Duncan: Not too bad really, the hardest part was moving from Scotland to the US. I had a lot of friends back home,but we were coming for a good reason. They don't have many resources for the blind back home. At least here there's a much better chance for Maria to lead a near normal life, there's no commission for the blind in Scotland, and with no commission there's no guide dog, no special education to help her get around and so forth. As for working parents,my mom didn't get a job till we moved here. Before that she was a home maker. And my dad,I'm not really sure what he did over there. I just know that he left in the morning and didn't come home until after dark.

>
Daria: Sounds like a really informed childhood. So what do they both do now?

>
Duncan: Well, my dad once we got over here worked a part time job while putting himself through school and now he's an electrical engineer for Lockheed Martin. And my mom, ...is a secretary for some mortgage company. (Shrugs) It's a job I guess.

>
Daria: Hey, it puts food on the table. And as long as she likes what she does, then I can't imagine it being that bad.

>
Duncan: Good point. It's probably the same philosophy my parents used when I went to become a firefighter.

>
Daria: (smiles) They must have, otherwise they would have used

common sense and yanked you back home by your shirt collar.

>
Duncan: (tries to wrap his arms about her waist) Don't think they haven't tried, love.

>
Daria: (squirms free) Hey now, none of that. You have to go to work, remember?

>
Duncan: You would have to remind me, wouldn't you.

>
Daria: (Turns Duncan around and pushes him toward the door) Out the door now, I'll see you after you get home. (Shuts the door behind him and pants a little) God, that guys heavy!

>

>(Cut to the inside of the Lawndale mall. It's not very crowded given that it's a weekday, and Trent and Maria are taking advantage of the lessened presence of mall patrons by walking the halls themselves. Maria holds onto Trent's elbow instead of Cheyenne's leash this time although the dog is still with them and walking directly alongside of Maria to her right.)

>Trent: I'm glad we were able to get out and do something different for once. Most of the time we either hang out at my house or go to the pub for a gig. I'm surprised you never got bored with me.

>Maria: (chuckles) I'm used to not going out that much, Trent. If you recall I can't exactly walk out of the house, jump into the car and drive wherever I please at a moments notice. If I ever want to go someplace it either has to be within walking distance,or I have to arrange for a ride which can tend to be a rather tedious task. Nobody is ever around when you need them, I've noticed.

>Trent: What about me?

>Maria: You're around when you can be, and I appreciate that. But your not just a means of transportation,..... I hope you know that. Besides, You've got a job to go to.

>Trent: I know.

>Maria: And as for me, ...well lets just say that job options are rather limited if you know what I mean. (chuckles) People are a little apprehensive when they find out that the person they are interviewing for a job is blind. They tend to feel the need to walk on eggshells around me. (Sighs) What's a girl to do?

>Trent: Well, no matter what happens. You know I'll always take care of you, whether you find a job or not.

>Maria: (smiles and reaches over to feel his face) I know, I just want to feel useful. I hate the idea of sitting on my butt, and because it's a result of no one wanting to give me the chance to prove myself in the workplace makes it even worse. If I could find someone outside of a grocery store willing to take the necessary steps to help me get started then that would at least be something.

>Trent: What job skills do you have?

>Maria: I can type, I've got the keys to the keyboard memorized and all I would need to use a computer in the workplace would be a speech program to vocalize the text on the screen. (Pause) But that could be EXPENSIVE.... and nobody wants to spend any extra money even if it would help someone. (Sighs again) I can use the phone with no problem,but telemarketer's are such a pain and I don't want to become something that I hate.

>Trent: (thinks for a moment) What about if you were required to work something with a bunch of switches and knobs?

>Maria: Typically that requires sight, but just for the sake of example I could place a braille label on each of the switches or knobs telling me what that thing was. But like I said, that would require sight. Switches and knobs are typically associated with

gauges or something that would need to be watched. Why, what did you have in mind?

>Trent: I could talk to Matt, my boss at work. I could see if I could get you a job working with me in the sound booth. You're a great listener, you might not even need the gauges after a while and as for the rest I might be able to be your eyes.

>Maria: Not to burst your bubble, but wouldn't that be a conflict of interest given that we're sort of involved with each other?

>Trent: (shrugs) We'd have to contain ourselves until after work but I can manage that if you can. I'll talk to Matt the next time I work.

>Maria: It's a great thought, Trent. And I appreciate it, but I'm not going to get my hopes up. I hope you don't feel offended.

>Trent: (shakes his head) I don't think it's possible for you to offend me. (Beat) Speaking of being involved with each other,have you shown the ring to your family?

>Maria: (Smiles brightly) Nope, I haven't shown it to anyone yet. I want to savor it for myself for a bit before people start badgering me with questions like "have you set a date yet?" and "when are the grand babies coming?". God, that's all we need right now.

>Trent: (coughlaughs) I can't see myself as a dad.

>
Maria: (Shrugs) That's okay, I can't see myself as being a mom so lets do ourselves a favor and be careful. Is that cool with you?

>
Trent: (Smirks) That's cool with me. (Sighs) I just have to figure out how big of a wedding I can pay for. I hate to say it but I can't promise you something very big.

>
Maria: (reaches out in search of Trent and seizes him for a stiff hug) I don't care about that, as long as both our parents are there and a few of our friends then I'll be happy beyond belief.

>
Trent: (laugh/coughs) I guess I'll have to make sure I can track mine down then. They tend to take off on their own for long periods of time.

>
Maria: (Smiles) Just do your best then.

>
Trent: (looks ahead to see that they are nearing the mall movie theater) Hey, want to listen to a movie?

>
Maria: I think I could manage enough energy for that, do you want me to spring for the food?

>
Trent: We'll split it, you get the food and I'll get the tickets. With theater prices the way they are these days we should pretty much come up even.

>
Maria: (Turns her head in the direction of her dog) What about you Cheyenne, feel like watching a movie? (Cheyenne lets out a cheerful bark and lets her tongue hang out as she pants in enthusiasm) It sounds like it's a date then.

>
Trent: (smirks) Cool, I'll read off the movie titles as soon as we are close enough. Anything you've been wanting to see?

>
Maria: (Smirks) ANYTHING,literally.

>
(Cut to Jane's house at about one on the afternoon. Daria walks up to the front door and Knocks. After a minute and no answer she knocks again and after another minute or so Daria feels around the top of the door ledge for the spare house key and upon finding it she lets herself into the house.)

>
Daria: (looks about the house as she enters and from the living room she can just barely see into the kitchen and noticed that it

looked like a hurricane had been through there.) Jane...? (Beat) Jane are you here? (Daria walks into the kitchen to notice that things are not as disturbed as they had appeared. There was some spilled coffee on the floor accompanied by a broken mug. The kitchen table appears to have been moved slightly as if someone had backed into it. She could tell by the rings of filth on the floor as the table had been in the same spot for years on end. Cleaning did not seem to be a characteristic of the Lane clan. Daria walked out of the kitchen and down the hall still on the first floor to the den. At least it had been intended to be one at some point in the past. As Daria opened the door slowly she could hear the tv and as she opened it wider she saw two people lying on the couch under some sort of old blanket while sleeping. Upon closer examination she notices one of these two people to be Jane.) (Daria walks in and shakes Jane awake) Jane....? Yo ...Jane, wake the hell up already.

>
Jane: (Stirs from under the blanket and opens her eyes)
Oh.....hey Daria. (Looks about the room) What time is it?

>
Daria: It's one in the afternoon. I take it you didn't go to your class today,you know you only have one more before your final. (Looks over at the other person) And who the hell is this....?

>
Jane: Yea,I know.....I KNOW I have one more class. It was an accident, ...okay. I didn't mean to fall back asleep. (Rubs her face and gently gets up so as not to disturb the other person)
This....is Tim, he's the guy who hit me yesterday.

>
Daria: So this is how you meet guys now is it? Interesting,HAZARDOUS,but still interesting. So what happens if you meet a guy who already HAS a girlfriend,drop her off a cliff?

>
Jane: Oh your hilarious, Daria. (Points to the hall) Look, while sleeping beauty is still out can you help me clean up the kitchen. We um..... sort of made a mess of things.

>
Daria: (follows Jane out of the room and into the kitchen) Yea, I saw that. So what happened?

>
Jane: (picks the dust pan and brush up off the floor) I have NO idea, apparently I dropped my wallet when I jumped out of my car to punch his lights out yesterday and he showed up this morning to return it and exchange insurance information.

>
Daria: And it didn't occur to you that he could have been some nut who picked your pocket and shown up here with some ulterior motive?

>
Jane: Of COARSE it occurred to me. But I doubt he's just ANY nut, he's got the black eye I gave him and my class ring is imprinted into the bruise right where I hit him.

>
Daria: Okay, so he is the same guy you hit. He could STILL be a nut.

>
Jane: Hey, what can I say. We share the same taste in coffee, ...besides I made sure to intimidate him in case he tried anything.

>
Daria: Like...?

>
Jane: (smiles) I pulled out a big carving knife and threatened to make him a Eunice.

>
Daria: (nods) That'll do it. So you let some stranger in your house and had coffee with him because ...what? You felt sorry for pulling out in front of him and placing both of your lives in danger? Or were you just THAT bored and wanted somebody to talk to?

>
Jane: Look, I had just woke up and I wasn't awake yet. At the time coffee was a much larger priority than worrying about a possible

deranged psychopath.

>
Daria: (Crosses her arms) Makes sense, why worry about death if your not even awake enough to know you're alive yet. So what else happened?

>
Jane: (smirks) It got weird,and that's putting it lightly. (Sighs) We started talking and comparing battle scars. He showed me the black eye I gave him and I showed him the six stitches my side window gave me. The next thing I know we were both pissing each other off, I took a swing at him, he caught my fist and we struggled a little bit. (Smirks) The next thing I knew we were just staring into each others eyes and I tried to shove my tongue down his throat.

>
Daria: Taking the whole aggressive dating thing to a new level are we Jane?

>
Jane: Hey shut up,.....I don't even know what got into me alright?

>
Daria: Judging by what happened I would say lust got into you.

>
Jane: It wasn't lust and we did NOT have sex,it was something different. I don't know what, ...I just know it was different.

>
Daria: (Sighs and takes a moment to reflect) Okay,I can swallow that bit. So what do you know about him?

>
Jane: Just his name, rank, and occupation. He's a mechanic of some sort and he like to fly.

>
Daria: So you're into a grease monkey?

>
Jane: Hey, he's not so bad. And paint can be made from grease so he might just turn out to be useful.

>
Daria: Wonderful, maybe he'll let you stand behind the engines of whatever plane he flies you can do one of those funky art projects where you let the prop wash blow paint onto a canvas.

>
Jane: No thanks, I think that's just a little TOO risky for my taste.

>
Daria: Riskier than letting a complete stranger into your house because you hit his car and then making out with him on the couch?

>
Jane: You really DO know how to take the fun out of something that turned out to be rather fun don't you?

>
Daria: (smiles) I have been told that before, yes.

>
Jane: You know what,he didn't even tell me what he flies. I think I'm going to have to wake him up and question the blonde little buggler some more.

>
Daria: How could he,you were too busy trying to shove your tongue down his throat if I recall correctly.

>
Jane: (laughs and throws a piece of that broken cup at Daria) Oh shut up and let me have my fun will you.

>
Daria: Fine, ...but before you do. Where are your paints, ...we might as well have some fun with him as long as he's out.

>
Jane: (thinks for a moment) And.....when he wakes up and see's what we've done,his first reaction would give us a pretty good clue as to what sort of guy he is. (Smirks) That's just evil, Daria.I love it! (They both finish cleaning and leave the kitchen)

>

>(Cut to the kitchen a few hours later. Daria and Jane had just woken Tim up a few minutes before and Jane invited him into the kitchen where there are many shiny surfaces to see her handy work on)

>Tim: Listen, I'm really sorry about falling asleep. And.....I know

what happened earlier was a bit unusual for someone you'd just met.

>Jane: Hey it's no sweat, ...really. And I hate to just kick you out and all but you know, I can't avoid my friends.

>Tim: No, ...no, I wouldn't expect you too. Um,I'll just take my rental car on home then.

>Jane: You've got the insurance info I gave you?

>Tim: Yea I've got it, ...thanks. (Jane and Daria show him to the door and open it to find that Trent and Maria were just on their way in.) Oh,uh excuse me. (Moves to walk past them but pauses to look up at Maria before proceeding the rest of the way out the door) DAMN,you're a tall one.

>Trent: (stares oddly at Tim's face as he walks by as he notices the words "Jane wuz here" written in paint on several locations on Tim's face accompanied by arrows pointing to Tim's black eye) Hey uh.....(Jane motions for him not to say anything) Take it easy. (Tim responds in kind as he walks out to his car and Trent closes the door behind him) Who was that?

>Maria: Did anybody besides me smell paint as that guy walked by? (Jane and Daria burst out laughing)

>Jane: (trying to contain herself) That was the guy who hit my car last night. He came over to get some information from me and we started talking, we both fell asleep on the couch, Daria showed up later and woke me up so we decided to have a little fun with him for our trouble.

>Maria: (Turns in Trent's direction) Which means they did what?

>Trent: Jane painted her name on the guys forehead .(Maria laughs)

>Maria: Let me know what happens when he finds out. (Maria and Trent walk up to Jane and Daria and they all walk into the kitchen)

>Daria: Hey Jane, is that mint chocolate chip ice cream still in the freezer.

>Jane: Yea,dig some of that out while Trent tells us the news. (Daria heads to the fridge and digs out the ice cream, then goes to the cupboard in search of bowls) So while she's doing that, Trent. Let's hear the news already.

>Trent: (shrugs) What news? Why don't we talk about that guy who just walked on out of here?

>Jane: Hey, ... enough about mystery boy already. (Looks down at Maria's left hand) I saw the new jewelry, Maria. So like I said, Let's hear the news.

>Maria: (lifts her hand in the air for all to see) Oh,you mean this? I'll give you two guesses but I'll bet you'll only need one.

>Daria: (As she sets the bowls on the table) Puff the magic dragon asked you to marry him? (Shakes her head) Tsk...tsk, Pete will be jealous that your stealing his invisible friend away. (Jane smirks as she decides to cut the joke short)

>Jane: Congratulations Maria, oh and Trent. Just to let you know that if you let Maria down in any way, I've heard straight from the horses mouth that Duncan will break both your legs.

>Daria: That was YOU he was talking about, Jane.

>Jane: Hey, it can apply to Trent too. Why should I be the only one living in fear?

>Maria: You two will have to fill me in on that later, as for now. Thank you,and just to cut you off early. No we have not made and concrete plans as of yet.

>Trent: We'll be upstairs if you guys need us. (Moves to guide Maria

out of the kitchen)

>Daria: You're not going to share this stuff with us? If I put it back in the freezer god knows how long it will take to thaw it from a frozen block the next time. Don't you remember the cake Jane got me a while back when I got my license?

>Trent: Hmm....yea, better leave it out over night for us. We'll eat it later, right now Maria and I just want to talk about some stuff alone.

>Jane: Well, don't do anything that I wouldn't do. (Trent and Maria leave the kitchen)

>Daria: Don't you mean that you WOULD do?

>Jane: (Smirks) Oh shut up.

>Daria: (studies Jane for a moment) So,what's the deal

>
Jane: What deal? We're about to eat some ice cream.

>
Daria: I mean what's the deal with you and this Timothy guy? It's obvious that there were sparks and you've only just met the guy. This isn't going to turn into another Tom fiasco is it?

>
Jane: Look, it was nothing so don't even soil yourself over it. It was just something weird that happened, you of all people should understand the power of a crush.

>
Daria: (scowls) It didn't look like any sort of crush I've ever seen.

>
Jane: How could you know? You've only had one. (Daria flips Jane the bird) Look,we exchanged information, granted things got a little hot under the collar so to speak but that's it. End of story,I'll most likely never see the guy again, which of course would no doubt make you happy.

>
Daria: I have no problems with you finding a guy, Jane. I'm just saying be careful, that's all. We've both been hurt before,history doesn't need to repeat itself.

>
Jane: (Smirks) You're not going to quote that thing about the butterfly my mom tends to say are you?

>
Daria: Not if I can still retain my sanity, I'm not.

>
Jane: (Smirks) Just rest easy knowing that life goes on, Ok? I'm cool with it and I don't doubt that I will have forgotten all about whatever it was that happened between Tim and I by tomorrow.

>
Daria: (Raises an eyebrow) You've got his name pretty well engraved into your vocabulary don't you?

>
Jane: Hey, he only just left. Give me a night to sleep it off, ...it would be like we were in high school again. (Daria just smiles and starts to scoop out the ice cream into the bowls)

>
(Cut to the next morning, it's early...roughly the same time as the day before when Jane woke out of a sound sleep. The front door to Jane's house opens and Jane steps out with a smile and her back pack slung over one shoulder indicating that she is on her way to college for the day. As soon as she closes the door behind her she looks about eagerly hoping that a familiar face will drop by as a result of having forgotten something. But she sees no one out of the ordinary)

>
Jane: (Smile turns to a frown and sighs) Okay,so maybe it won't be so easy to forget. Aw hell, maybe I'll just get lucky and DARIA will run into him for me. (She says this as Daria's car happens to pull up right on time to take her to school. Jane pauses for a moment and then proceeds down the walk and gets into Daria's car and they drive off as the scene fades.)

>

>The End.....

>Feed back is always appreciated, ..I may be reached at
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11. Morality Check

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV

>
Note : This story is the next in the Unseen Phenomenon Series,
it takes place approximately three days after "Fate's Twisted Sense
of Humor."

>

>
 Morality Check

> By
 Wildgoose

>

>
 It's late in the afternoon one Thursday, the house is quiet.
Kyrsten and Michael Macleod are both still at work. Duncan had, at
least as far as she knew, gone straight from work to meet up with
Daria and do whatever it was that they do when they're alone. And as
far as things were concerned with Trent, He was practicing with the
rest of his band. Trent had called and offered for Maria to come with
him and hang out with the band but she had opted to stay home and
enjoy the peace and quiet. And in doing so, Maria lye sprawled on her
back over the top of her bed. She took her glasses off and left them
on the end table on the right side of her bed where she was certain
she would be able to find them again. Maria let out a sigh as she
stretched herself out to cover the bed from the pillow all the way
down to the end of the bed where her feet could touch the baseboard.
While enjoying the quiet Maria decided to occupy herself by rolling
over and reaching under the bed and feeling around for some of the
braille magazines with raised pictures that she kept hidden under
there.

>
Maria: (Chuckles to herself) It's a good thing mom trusts me
enough not to go searching through my room. (Starts to flip through
the pages looking for a bookmark she had left when suddenly the
doorbell rings a few times causing her to jump and snap the magazine
shut) What the.....? (Pause) I don't believe this,ONLY when
you've got time to yourself do people have to come ringing the
doorbell. (sighs) Well, I guess it could be worse. Whoever it is
could have caught me in the bathroom. (Maria shoves the magazine back
under the bed and begins to make her way out of the bed room,
downstairs and towards the front door. After the doorbell rings a few
more times Maria gets irritated and calls towards the door) All right
already, I'm coming!! (Just as she reaches the door and prepares to
open it Maria hears Cheyenne trot up behind her and take up a
position almost alongside her to her left just in case) (Maria opens
the door and listens for a response) Hello.....? (To her surprise a
response comes almost immediately)

>
Helen: Oh uh,hello Maria.

>
Maria: (thinks for a moment as she tries to place the voice)
Oh....Mrs. Morgendorffer isn't it? It's been a while since we've seen
each other.

>
Helen: Oh yes, ...well I've been busy and you know how Daria is about bringing friends over to the house.

>
Maria: Yea,I guess I know. So what brings you over to my house?

>
Helen: Well I was looking for Daria,.. to be honest. I needed to talk to her about something, (sighs) and she's just so hard to get a hold of anymore. She almost never calls,and having her show up at the house is damn near unheard of. (Studies Maria for a moment) I guess she's not here?

>
Maria: (V.O) What was your first clue? (Out loud) (shrugs) No, ...sorry. I can pass a message along if you like.

>
Helen: No,that's okay. (Groans a little) I guess I'll just have to leave ANOTHER message on her machine.

>
Maria: Are you okay Mrs. Morgendorffer? No offense but you sound really bummed out.

>
Helen: Oh I'll be alright,I just had some things on my mind. I thought maybe I could talk with someone I could relate too,and frankly Daria was the first person who came to mind. (Sighs) No matter..... (turns to walk away)

>
Maria: (V.O) Oh god, I'm probably going to regret this. (Out loud) Um.....I've got time to talk if you really need someone that badly. I'm a good listener,so I've been told.

>
Helen: Oh I'm not really sure if this is something that you would want to hear, ...it's rather personal. (Thinks for a moment and decides it's better than nothing) Are you good at keeping things to yourself?

>
Maria: (V.O) Are you kidding? Lady,I know shit on people that would make the guy in the confession booth turn white. (Out loud) Yea, I'm pretty sure I can keep a secret. Come on in, ...and drop your load on me. (V.O) I wonder what I should charge her for this?

>
Helen: I just REALLY need to talk to someone and frankly Jake is just NOT someone who would be able to handle what I want to talk about. Are you sure you want to do this?

>
Maria: (V.O) No, but I seem to already have committed myself to the task haven't I. (Out loud) Hey, ...I had nothing better to do. (V.O) Yea right,tell that to the guys in the magazine I stuffed under my bed. (Maria steps aside until she hears Helen walk past her into the house and then shuts the door behind her)

>
Helen: I really appreciate this. If you like I'll spring for dinner.

>
Maria: (Smiles from ear to ear) Mrs. Morgendorffer, you've just satisfied my retainer fee. What did you have in mind?

>
Helen: Oh not much, ...I'm a light eater. (Maria grimaces)

>
Maria: Oh god,don't tell me you're a salad nut.

>
Helen: (laughs nervously) Well you know what they say, a moment on the lips, a life time on the hips.

>
Maria: You're joking,... right? (Thinks for a moment) Eh,you may be right. I probably won't be able to eat anything I want forever. There's a number near the phone on the coffee table for a steaks and subs place. I think they serve salad stuffs there too. Call up and order me a medium cheese steak with mushrooms,and whatever it is that your having. (Helen looks at Maria with interest)

>
Helen: You're actually going to eat all of that?

>
Maria: Oh yea, I have a high metabolism. I get light headed if I don't eat regularly.

>
Helen: (sighs) Oh to be young again. (Looks about for the phone)

Oh my,it's rather dark in here. Do you mind if I turn on the light?

>
Maria: (Shrugs) It wouldn't make much of a difference to me, ...and if you can find the light then more power to you. Personally I've never had any use for it.

>
Helen: Ohyes, I remember. Um....., how long have you beensight deficient?

>
Maria: (laughs) No need for the eggshells, Mrs. Morgendorffer. Say it loud and say it proud, I'm flat out blind. I've been that way since birth.

>
Helen; Oh my.....You've never seen at all?

>
Maria: Nope, but....it's pretty hard to miss something I've never had in the first place so don't sweat it any. (Helen finds the light switch in the dark and turns on the light. She then locates the phone and calls the number sitting next to it and orders. After she hangs up she turns to Maria and continues to talk)

>
Helen: Okay,they said about half an hour.

>
Maria: (sinister voice) Excellent, everything is going according to plan.

>
Helen: (as she walks away from the phone towards some pictures on a nearby shelf) What....?

>
Maria; (picks her head up and notes that Helen has changed position and then turns in the direction of her voice) Oh nothing, I was just amusing myself. It wasn't important. (Thinks for a moment) What are you doing over there?

>
Helen: Oh.....I was just looking at some of these pictures. What kind of dress is that?

>
Maria: (confused) I never wear dresses Mrs. Morgendorffer,what does it look like?

>
Helen: It comes down to your knee's, and there's a part that comes over one shoulder, ...It's blue with black stripes.

>
Maria: (shakes her head) That's a kilt,not a dress. (After a moment) Why don't you have a seat on the couch,I know there's one somewhere in here.

>
Helen: Oh,yes of course. How rude of me to go wandering about your house.

>
Maria: It's not rude,it's just off topic. You came over here wanting to talk about something personal and the next thing you know your checking out somebody else's pictures.

>
Helen: (Chuckles nervously) Sorry,I'm not used to talking to other people about myself. It's usually the other way around and I end up bailing others out.

>
Maria: Whatever,(makes her way to a nearby recliner and has a seat) So what's bugging you so much?

>
Helen: Well. ...it's not something that's in any way easy for me to talk about. (Looks Maria over) are you sure you can keep all this confidential?

>
Maria: (irritated) Just talk already,whatever your skeleton is I'll just shove it in my closet with the rest of them never to be heard of again. (Helen wears an insulted expression on her face as she is not used to someone giving her any kind of order, ...but concedes since she's already placed her trust in this person)

>
Helen; I've got this.....problem at work. Someone I've been working with for years gave her notice recently that she would be leaving for another job.

>
Maria: (looks unimpressed) So.....you're really upset over a coworker leaving? You've got to be kidding me,this person can't be the only one you've ever worked with.

>
Helen: (reluctantly) No.....but, this IS the only time a co-worker has ever.....demonstrated personal affection for me.

>
Maria: (V.O) God dammit,I knew I should have gotten the tape recorder. This could turn out to be some golden stuff! (Out loud) Mrs Morgen..... (she is cut off by Helen)

>
Helen: Call me Helen, ...this Mrs. Morgendorffer stuff makes me feel like a dried up old maid.

>
Maria: Okay,Helen. Whatever floats your boat. So some guy at work came on to you. In a way I would think that you should feel flattered. (Thinks for a moment) Don't take that the wrong way, an unwanted advance is by no means acceptable. But at least it still reminds you that you're young and attractive.

>
Helen: All things being equal that would be true, ...and don't think for a minute that I don't know how to handle men in that respect.

>
Maria: So.....where's the problem.

>
Helen: (almost mumbles) It wasn't a man.

>
Maria: WHOA.....! So if I've got this straight,a woman you've been working with came on to you? (Shakes her head) I can't say I've ever had THAT experience.

>
Helen: (face turns red in embarrassment and chuckles nervously) I'm afraid it was something more than just a pass. (the scene blurs as Helen continues with her story and comes back into focus a few days before. It is late in the evening at Helen's office, Helen herself along with her secretary Mary Anne are the only ones within the building. Helen being the workaholic that she is simply refused to leave until she had completed all of the paperwork necessary for an upcoming hearing. After a while Mary Anne knocks on the office door and then comes in.)

>
Mary Anne: Mrs. Morgendorffer? I've finished filing the affidavits on the Ericson case.

>
Helen: Thank you Mary Anne, I'm almost finished here myself. (Pauses) I'm sorry to hear that you'll be leaving us soon, ...you've been a good employee. If you don't mind my asking, where will you be going from here?

>
Mary Anne: (unenthusiastically) Oh,I 've been offered a job with Johnson and Simons as a consulting assistant.

>
Helen: (gets up from her chair and walks to the nearby window to look at the sunset) I didn't know you had any experience with consulting.

>
Mary Anne: I have SOME,it was in my resume when I applied to work with you. I'm surprised you don't remember that.

>
Helen: Oh,well I can't be expected to remember EVERYTHING now can I.

>
Mary Anne: (shrugs) You have up to this point. (Helen scowls while still facing the window)

>
Helen: Well, You'll be missed that's for sure. There aren't many legal secretaries who can keep up with my work pace.

>
Mary Anne: I've always admired your dedication Mrs. Morgendorffer, that's why I stuck around.

>
Helen: Oh well thank.....

>
Mary Anne; (cuts Helen off) Granted there are some..... other things I've admired about you. (Helen turns to face Mary Anne with a slightly confused look) You've got a wonderful family Mrs. Morgendorffer, though I couldn't help but hear you complain about your husband's ...lack of interest in you on several occasions.

>
Helen: What has THAT got to do with anything? And what the hell

were you doing listening in on my conversations.

>
Mary Anne: Well it wasn't really eavesdropping, you had a tendency to speak rather loudly and it really wasn't that hard to hear what you were saying. (Comes much closer,.... almost face to face and wrings her hands a little bit)

>
Helen: Yes, ...so what? My husband may not pay as much attention to me as he used to but he's still a good man.

>
Mary Anne: I have no doubt of that Mrs. Morgendorffer, but there's something that I've been wanting to tell you about myself for the past several years,and since I'm leaving in a few days I won't really have the chance to say it later.

>
Helen: (becoming irritated) What the HELL are you talking about? Say what?

>
Mary Anne: You're a very attractive woman Helen, ...and I was thinking that since your husband doesn't pay attention to you....in that way anymore. That maybe..... I could help you fill that void.....?

>
Helen: (looks at Mary Anne with an extremely awkward expression) Say what.....? (Mary Anne leans forward and kisses Helen, and as Helen backs up a few steps against the wall Mary Anne follows forward and continues to kiss a wide eyed Helen. (Scene blurs and comes back into focus In Maria's home.)

>
Maria: (sits in her chair trying to think of something profound to say) Whoa.....! It's always the quiet ones isn't it. So what did you do?

>
Helen: I didn't know what TO do,.... men I can handle. I've never had a problem with that,but I was totally unprepared for this. The thought never even crossed my mind that she might be.....

>
Maria: Gay...?

>
Helen: Bi.....or so she said later.

>
Maria: So you did what in response?

>
Helen: I was so shocked,I uh.....didn't do anything. I just stood there and let her continue. I didn't know what else to do.

>
Maria: (trying to take all of this in) So.....even though it was unexpected and probably originally unwanted,you didn't stop her. You just,let her continue. (Helen shakes her head yes and Maria whistles in amazement) You're a stronger woman than I Helen, ...I think I would have spazzed and beat the hell out of her. (Pauses) Did anything other than that happen?

>
Helen: (wrings her hands nervously) No,that was it. After about five minutes she backed off and said good night. Then she left and I just sat there for an hour and tried to figure out what had just happened.

>
Maria: It seems pretty obvious what had just happened. Your secretary has got the hots for you and wanted to tell you about it in detail.

>
Helen: (scowls) Thank you, Maria. (Sighs and tries not to cry) I just can't believe it's true,.... is it REALLY possible that another woman could find me more attractive than my own husband?

>
Maria: (takes a deep breath) I uh.....really don't think I'm qualified to answer that for you.

>
Helen: (scoffs) Why SHOULD you need to answer that,it seems pretty obvious to me that it's true. What HAPPENED to my marriage? We used to be so virile, we sometimes did it a few times a day. We.....

>
Maria: Um...Helen, I REALLY don't need to hear about.... (The doorbell rings and Helen gets up to answer the door but is cut off by

Maria.) I've got it,you might decide to take your emotions out on the delivery guy as well. (Maria finds her way to the door and moments later comes back with the food and walks past Helen while making her way into the kitchen) Come on, we'll eat in here. (Helen follows and after entering the kitchen begins to search for a light switch)

>
Helen: (looks about as she turns the light on to notice that Maria is going about her business as normal) I don't think I could ever get used to getting around in the dark like that.

>
Maria: Hey, I was born with it so I had little choice but to get used to it real quick. (Has a seat at the kitchen table and feel around for the contents of the paper bag) Is this one yours? (Holds up a cool plastic container)

>
Helen: Why yes, it is. How could you tell?

>
Maria: They typically don't heat up salad, Helen. (Reaches into the bag and pulls out a warm tinfoil package and they both begin to eat. After a while Maria resumes the previous conversation.)

So.....your secretary wants your body. I don't see that as a tremendous problem, just tell her that you don't feel the same way and that you're happily married. The way I understand it, she'll either take the hint and move on or she'll try to destroy your marriage with your husband so she can have you all to herself. If the latter happens,then you'll just have to kill her. (Maria smirks) Either way this whole lesbo thing isn't all that important. You're letting this bother you because you're unsure if, in you're middle age years, that you're still attractive to the opposite sex. Specifically you're husband.

>
Helen: (drops her head into her hands) Why do I even bother? (Sighs and picks her head back up as she thinks) So.....what you're saying is that if I found a way to get Jake to show interest then Mary Anne would see that I'm happier with Jake and go away?

>
Maria: Uh.....I guess. Actually I was just trying to suggest that you just ignore her and deal with more important things, but hey that works even better doesn't it. Well what do you know, the mind really does think better with a full stomach.

>
Helen: (ignores the last comment as she twirls her fork in her food. Her mind going a mile a minute) What would be a sure fire way to get Jake's interest?

>
Maria: (Shrugs) You're asking the wrong person, ...you've probably got a lot more experience under your belt than I have.

>
Helen: Oh no, that wouldn't work. Bondage would remind him of his father whipping him and he would fly off into another one of his rants.

>
Maria: (V.O) Ok,that was just a LITTLE more information than was necessary at this point. (Out loud) Here's an idea, ...just confront him and demand sex. That typically gets a guys attention right off the bat. I know Trent seems to respond well to it. (Smiles)

>
Helen: (Gets up from the table) Oh no....no....no, that won't do. If I know Jake he'll either cower or run away. (Sighs heavily) Well, thank you for listening to me rant. But I'm not sure if it's helping, I think I'm just going to have to figure this out on my own. Hell, I've been doing it for my entire lifetime anyway. Why should this be any easier? (Starts to head for the door) I'll talk to you later, Maria.

>
Maria: Helen.....? Has anyone ever told you that you're a very controlling person? Hey, it wouldn't kill you just to let someone else take the reins for a while. (Hears Helen close the door on her

way out) (shrugs) Hell, I got free food out of it so at least somebody in this whole mess is happy. (Begins to consume the rest of her cheese steak) (V.O) I'll give you one thing Daria, you've got one seriously weird mom. (Thinks for a moment) Wow,she didn't even notice the ring. I didn't even get inside the door of my house and my mom was itching to see it.(1)

>
(Cut to about ten O'clock that evening at the Morgendorffer home. Jake is busy in the kitchen struggling to understand the directions on a bag of microwave popcorn. Helen still dressed in her work attire walks quietly up behind him)

>
Jake: Why the hell do they tell you to lie the thing face down when the picture clearly shows that the bag is face up? Stupid instructions.....they toy with your mind. That's what they do!

>
Helen: (sighs) Jake what the hell are you doing?

>
Jake: I'm trying to make some popcorn. (Jake starts before Helen can say a word) Oh sure, I know what's on your mind. The doctor told you to stay away from oils, Jake. Remember your heart, Jake. Why the HELL can't anyone just let me enjoy something in peace?

>
Helen: (V.O) Oh god, this just isn't going to work. He's started already (She starts to tear up a little)

>
Jake: (stops his rant as he's rarely seen Helen cry for no reason before. He takes a deep breath to calm himself) What's the matter Helen?

>
Helen: Jake, why don't you ever look at me anymore?

>
Jake: What are you talking about, honey? I'm looking at you right now.

>
Helen: NOT like that, I mean like you used to. Jake there was a time when the second we got time to ourselves, we couldn't keep our hands off of each other. Then after the heart attackyou just didn't act as frisky as you used to. I didn't think anything of it at the time, ...I thought it was just because you needed to recuperate and you'd bounce back to your old self sooner or later. But that didn't happen,and then when Quinn died.It was just as if you had stopped looking at me all together. It was as if we were just friends or something.

>
Jake: But Helen.....

>
Helen: Jake,for gods sake. There are women out there who seem to find me more attractive than YOU do. What sort of signal does that send to you?

>
Jake: Oh my god Helen, you never told me that you were into THAT. EWWWWW!!!

>
Helen: Dammit Jake, I am NOT into THAT! Can't you get it through your thick skull? (Walks over to the kitchen table and slumps down in a chair) (mumbles) Oh god,....why do I even bother?

>
Jake: What is it that you want from me, Helen? Is it that I don't say "I love you enough"? Honey, you know I do.

>
Helen: Sometimes it just isn't enough to say it, Jake. I may be middle age,but I can still feel young. I just thought that you could too,I guess I was wrong.

>
Jake: (sighs and realizes what he has to do) What did you want to do?

>
Helen: (looks up at him with a depressed face) Use you're imagination, Jake. Get weird if you need to, I don't care at this point.

>
Jake: (starts to think) Weird..... (After a long moment Jake storms out of the kitchen and returns ten minutes later with a large brown shopping bag which he sets down on the counter, then he starts rummaging through the fridge)

>
Helen: Jake,.....what the hell are you up to?

>
Jake: (turns to look at her and lifts an eyebrow) Don't ask..... (he finds what he wants and then turns around and lifts Helen out of her chair and sits her on top of the table) Don't move from that spot. (Jake starts pulling things out of the paper bag one at a time, one of the things being a moustache trimmer. Helen just stares wide eyed)
>
(Cut to the next morning in Helen's office as Mary Anne comes in and prepares to get to work)
>
Mary Anne: Mrs. Morgendorffer....? (She walks over to check the machine and there is a message there from Helen stating that she won't be in this morning for personal reasons. Mary Anne just stands there speechless.)
>
The End.....

>
Footnote :
>
1 : Trent had given Maria an engagement ring in "Fate's Twisted Sense of Humor"
>Comments are always appreciated, ...I may be reached at wildgoose81@hotmail.com

12. Which Ever Way the Wind Blows

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV

>
Note : This story is the next in the Unseen Phenomenon series. This one takes place approximately three months after "Morality Check"

>

>

> Which Ever Way the Wind Blows
 By

> Wildgoose

>

> Commencement had ended no longer than ten minutes ago, family as well as friends had swarmed about the new graduates congratulating them on their prestigious accomplishment as scholars in whatever field it was that they had chosen to pursue. The scene is from the perspective of a young woman working her way through the crowd searching for a particular graduate. The woman pushed and shoved and ducked those who would dare to capture her likeness on film by accident marking her place in the lives of a lucky few of those people who would spend the rest of their lives wondering just who in the hell that was who had gotten caught in the picture with their own graduate. After at least ten to fifteen minutes of searching, the young woman catches a glimpse of the one for which she had spent so much time,at least in her eyes, searching for. As the woman comes closer, the other being sought turns around and yanks her own cap off to display a very familiar bowl haircut consisting of jet black hair.

>Jane: Hey, ...hey Amiga!! I knew you'd make it.

>Daria: (Continues to approach Jane until they are only a few paces apart) I had to, ..I'm you're only ride home. Remember?

>Jane: Oh yea,Trent had to walk to the gas station after he ran out JUST as he pulled into the parking lot. Convenient huh..? (pauses for a moment) I wonder why Maria didn't come with him when he brought me up here this morning.

>Daria: Because she knows better than to get in a car with your brother when the smell of gas fumes is actually fading away.

>Jane: Yea, with Trent's car I guess that WOULD be a strong indicator

that he's getting low on gas.

>Daria: As far as the car your brother drives is concerned it is.
(smirks) Do you think he'll want us to meet up with him and give him a ride back from the gas station? I imagine he's probably on his way back here with the gas can by now.

>Jane: Nah, Trent can make some PRETTY good time whenever his car is in trouble. He treats that thing better than the tank.

>Daria: There's a difference?

>Jane: Well YEA,The Tank is dead remember?

>Daria: (Takes a moment to appear in thought) As opposed to Trent's own car being ALMOST dead,yea I guess there is a slim difference. But just to be safe we should take a run by his car and see if he's back yet and in one piece. We don't need to risk the pale blue Scottish person marrying damaged goods now do we.

>Jane: Pale blue, ...what is she a Smurf now?

>Daria: You've never heard that expression? It's old as the hills,it's probably got something to do with the water being cold over there or something.

>Jane: Somehow I doubt that, but no matter. All is insignificant compared to the fact that I have now graduated from art school. The college has got people lined up for each of the graduates, waiting to take a look at what they can do.

>Daria: And just who do they have lined up for YOU?

>Jane: (flusters just a little) Oh, ...well for students who study the actual field of arts and crafts such as myself the prerequisites for landing a career are a little um..... different.

>Daria: (crosses her arms over her chest) Meaning what?

>Jane: Meaning that it's not enough to simply go to college and learn how to make a better artist out of yourself. You have to show off your work publicly and pray to god that a noted art critic doesn't puke on it. Thereby sending one's career hopelessly down in flames.

>Daria: Sounds like a game of Russian Roulette if you ask me.

>Jane: (Laughs) Yea, only with art instead of only one chamber being loaded it's like five out of the six.

>Daria: Don't you just love it how odds like that tend to make you feel all warm and fuzzy inside?

>Jane: Funny,when the odds are like that I always seem to get that same feeling in my underwear right about where my butt should be. It's also very often associated with a foul odor.

>Daria : (rolls her eyes) Well that's a little more information than I needed at the moment. (Beat) So do you need to return the cap and gown or what?

>Jane: Nope, they make you buy the damned thing at the cost of fifty bucks a head. What a jip, ...I mean what would the average person want to do with an old graduation gown. The styles and colors change pretty often anyway so it's not like somebody else would be want to use it or something. Besides,I thought the purpose of graduating was to put hell behind you, not to remind yourself of it for all eternity. (Sighs) BUT, ...as long as I already spent the money for the damned thing I figure I might as well hang my tassels on my rear view mirror like the rest of the world and then cut up the cap and gown and use it in one of my art projects.

>Daria: (shrugs) Sounds like money well wasted if you ask me. But take it this way,...at least we can consider it a form of recycling,.. that should keep all the green peace nuts happy to see one less piece of garbage thrown away.

>Jane: (Smiles) And here JUST when we thought we had branded you as an official pessimist you go and suggest something positive. (Shakes

her head) What ARE we going to do with you young lady?

>Daria: (frowns) Who cares,lets just hurry up and get the hell out of here. Being around another school only months after my own graduation gives me the CREEPS. I'm afraid somebody will show up with some sort of excuse to revoke my bachelor's degree. I think that little nightmare continued for a good week after my graduation.

>Jane: (faux reluctance) Oh FINE, we can get on out of herebut I'M driving.

>Daria: Why should YOU be driving? It's MY car. Besides at least I can say that I've never hit another vehicle.

>Jane: No, all you can say is that you hit a stupid defenseless animal with your car only to leave it in agony until somebody could show up to put the thing out of it's misery.

>Daria: Hey,maybe I was just giving the state government a hand in thinning out the herds, hell they let a hoard of inbred red necks do it every fall anyway, And THEY'RE trusted to use GUNS. (Long pause) But as long as we're speaking of cars, when exactly do you plan to get around to buying another one for yourself? It's been three months since you wrecked yours you know, ...and the only reason you made it to all of your classes was because I'd carted your ass around every morning and afternoon.

>Jane: (smiles) And my ass thanks you, ...but seriously, the insurance company is dragging it's feet with the check okay? As soon as it gets here, you and I can go out to pick up a car ASAP. Just be patient, already. Now toss me the keys before I forget how to drive and lose my license.

>Daria: You mean that wasn't the reason you wrecked your car in the first place? (Jane flips Daria the bird as she digs into her pocket and tosses her car keys to Jane.)

>Jane: Now WHERE is that lovely little chevy of yours parked.

>Daria: Might I suggest that we first go to the parking lot before we actually begin to search for the aforementioned vehicle? I'm relatively certain it would cut down on the time it'll take to find it.

>Jane: Now THAT would help wouldn't it.

>Daria: I'd like to think so,.....and as long as we're in the process of conducting a search. Where did you're brother leave HIS car?

>(Cut to the interior of Maria's house. Maria herself is seen wandering about the house anxiously looking for something to occupy herself with. As she passes by the answering machine located on the nearby wall existing as an integral part of the phone itself, the number one is steadily illuminated in bold red indicating a single message that has already been listened to and is waiting to be erased.)

>Maria: (trips over Cheyenne who has seated herself near the doorway to the kitchen) OOF! Sorry Cheyenne! (The dog gives a slight whimper and decides to relocate to another part of the house given that it's obvious that her services are not needed at the moment. After hearing the dog trot off Maria decides to look at her braille watch to note the time) I swear,Trent needs to get himself a watch, ...I don't care how much they depress him. How long could Jane's graduation possibly take? (Maria notices an odd odor in the air and takes the moment to try to recognize it,then sniffs herself) I don't believe this,I'm pacing so much I'm working up a sweat. (Sniffs herself again) Ew,I smell nasty. (Maria takes it upon herself to head upstairs for a shower figuring will that it will not only eliminate the body odor but it will serve to pass the time as

well.)

>(After a period of time the doorbell rings,and after a few minutes more it rings again. Maria eventually comes down the stairs looking as if she had just thrown some clothes on in a hurry. Her hair is still damp and her purple turtle neck shirt appears to be sticking to her skin. After several moments of negotiating her way through the downstairs living room she finds her way to the door and opens it) Hello?

>Trent: (offers her a warm greeting) Hey Maria, sorry I took so long but.....you know.

>Maria: (resumes her previous enthusiasm) Thank god, I've been waiting for you to show up for What seems like forever. (Almost jumps into his arms as she finds his lips with her fingers and plants a kiss. She then pulls back a bit) Ew....you smell like gasoline.

>Trent: (Laughs) Yea,I ran out of gas and I had to walk a ways carrying a gas can.

>Maria: Trent, is it that you actually forget that you have to put gas in the car every once in a while. Or is it that you forget that you actually have a job now that earns you money with which you can BUY the gas.

>Trent: Hey, old habits are hard to break. I'm just used to being broke all the time. But as long as you mentioned spending, we need to look for a place to hold the wedding reception.

>Maria: (Just stands there for a moment wondering what brought that up all of a sudden) Um....yea I imagine.

>Trent: What's wrong?

>Maria: Well, I'm certain that it might help if we actually set a date first. That way when we actually DO find a place to hold the reception,we'll be able to tell them WHEN we'll need the place ready by. Don't you think?

>Trent: Hmm....you might have a point. I guess that should be our next order of business, huh?

>Maria: (smiles) Not JUST yet, Trent. There's another matter that we may have to schedule around.

>Trent: (shrugs) Um...okay, what?

>Maria: The eye hospital left a message on the Machine, Trent. (1) (Pause) They've selected me to undergo the procedure,I'm so excited. I can't wait until my parents get home, they'll be thrilled.

>Trent: (raises an eyebrow) That's cool, Maria. But.... isn't this procedure an experiment?

>Maria: Yea, ...I know.

>Trent: So.....they said themselves that there was only a slim chance that it would work. And even if it DOES, ...they said shadows and MAYBE shapes. I'm extremely happy for you,but I also don't want you to be broken hearted if things don't work out.

>Maria: You're a sweet heart for wanting to look out for my best interests, Trent. And I understand what you're getting at, but I just can't help but be excited that there's even a CHANCE that I could get to see ANYTHING. And if it works, who knows how soon it will be before they can improve it to the point where I can have almost the vision that everyone else has,maybe it could be within my lifetime. (Plants another kiss on Trent's lips) We HAVE to celebrate, does your car have enough gas in it now to get us somewhere?

>Trent: (Smiles) Yea,I made sure to stop and fill the tank as soon as I got the car running again. So where would you like to go?

>Maria: (Searches for Trent's shoulder and then gives it a smack) You

KNOW how much I love the shore, Trent. And since the summer season hasn't officially started yet, there shouldn't be very many people down there,giving us a little privacy. Catch my drift?

>Trent: (wraps his arms about her waist) I think I've got the idea.,let's just see what kind of day we can make this turn out to be.

>Maria: I don't suppose an evening campfire on the beach would be out of the question, would it?

>Trent: We might be able to swing that,just bring some extra clothes with you. It still gets a bit chilly down at the shore this time of year.

>Maria: (smiles) All the more reason for you to keep me warm. And as far as telling my parents about my little surprise,they'll have to wait. I need to get out and have some fun for a bit.

>Trent: (smiles) So have the doctors told you when yet?

>Maria: No,they just said that I'd been selected to undergo the procedure and that they would stay in touch with me to iron out the details later. I'm just so excited about all of this.

>Trent: Hmm....yea,you'll eventually get to learn to read and write all over again.

>Maria: Huh...?

>Trent: Sighted people don't use braille, Maria. If they ever manage to give you enough sight to read text then you'll have to learn to read and write the English Language just like the rest of us do. It's going to be back to school for you, love.

>Maria: Damn....I'd forgotten about that. (Sighs) Well, it'll be worth it if I ever make it to that point.

>Trent: (smiles) Now you've got ME excited,lets get your stuff together so we can head out.

>Maria: Right then, I'll be right back. so you stay right here. I have to go upstairs and get a few things and if you follow me up then you'll just serve to distract me. And if you distract me then we'll NEVER get out of here.

>Trent: (Smiles evilly) But I'm just so GOOD at it.

>Maria: Yea, ...I know. That's the problem,I like it when you distract me. But I'd also like to get out of the house and down to the shore. So wait here and be a good boy.

>Trent: (sounds insulted) A good boy...? (Maria makes her way up the stairs and the scene fades out)

>(Cut to Daria's car heading down route twenty one with Jane at the wheel)

>Jane: I can't believe Trent was able to walk to a gas station and back in so little time. I would have thought he'd still be on his way back to the college with the gas can.

>Daria: Hey, like you said. He can be pretty quick when his car is involved.

>Jane: Quicker than I had thought, apparently. He put the gas in his tank and didn't even bother to stick around to make sure I had a ride home.

>Daria: He knows you, Jane. And in knowing you so well he knew that you'd know enough to call ME, ...Know what I mean? (Jane just stares at Daria blankly) But I DO have one question,if we didn't have to drive around looking for Trent walking down the side of the road, then why are we heading this way? Don't you usually take I-4?

>Jane: We will take I-4, This road intersects it about ten miles up and it will cut our trip home short by about half an hour.

>Daria: If this is such a great short cut, then why didn't you use it all the time? Or better yet,why didn't you tell ME about it, I could stand to save some gas you know.

>Jane: I only heard about it yesterday, There was this guy in my class who loved to travel to find inspiration for his artwork and as such had just about every map imaginable in his car. He showed me this shortcut out to Lawndale while we were waiting for you to show up and pick my butt up.

>Daria: And that brings up yet another question,if you knew you were going to graduate today,and you knowing THAT, you knew that AFTER today you would no longer have a NEED to travel up this way. Then why did you bother looking for a shortcut in the first place?

>Jane: Does it mater? I was bored and needed something to do while I was waiting for you, ..okay?

>Daria: Okay,I was just curious. Don't give yourself an seizure over it.

>Jane: (smirks) Can you really imagine me flopping around on the floor like that? (Pauses) Hmm....that gives me an idea for a project. Maybe it'll be just the sort of thing I'll need to get somebody important to notice my work. What do you think Daria...? (Looks toward Daria to catch her reaction and then slams on the brakes and lurches the car onto the shoulder sending Daria against her seat belt) SON OF A BITCH!!! (Lurches up to look in the rear view mirror)

>Daria: (scowls) What the hell is wrong with you? Did you almost hit something?

>Jane: (After studying the rear view mirror for another moment and then looking behind her) The flight line airport.

>Daria: (looks behind her and then off to her side before speaking in irritation) Jane,you act like you've never seen a local airport before. (Jane checks for traffic and then throws the car in reverse and accelerates toward the facility entrance, ...then throws it in drive and pulls through the main gate.) Jane, ...what the hell are you doing?

>Jane: I'm looking for somebody, ...do you mind? Or do you have something else you need to do at the moment?

>Daria: I don't think you'll find the hare Krishna's at this small of an airport, Jane. But if you like you can make an donation to ME and I'LL give you a nice little flower.

>Jane: (Doesn't even look at Daria) Yea,you're funny old friend.

>Daria: (frowns) Um...okay, I'm used to something a little wittier coming out of your mouth. But I guess everybody has their dog days. So who are you looking for?

>Jane: Tim said he worked at an airport called the flight line.

>Daria: (stares at Jane with a confused expression) Who the hell is.....Whoa, wait a minute. Do you mean to tell me that you stomped on the brakes and could have killed the both of us because you happened to remember some guy who totaled your car three months ago and haven't seen SINCE? I can't WAIT until you stop this car because I'm going to plant my boot right in your rear end.

>Jane: Sounds messy,I guess I'll just have to start driving up and down the runway until you change your mind.

>Daria: (Stares at Jane) You would wouldn't you? (Thinks for a moment) Yea,you would. (Sighs) Alright,we'll check the place out and see if this guy works here. Damn,I thought you said you were going to put him out of your mind?

>Jane: I did,but he popped back in for some reason. I can't explain it,I saw the sign and I suddenly remembered.

>Daria: Well, ...at least we survived that little stunt of yours. But I'm driving the rest of the way home if you don't mind.

>Jane; (smirks) Sounds like an even trade. (Jane pulls up to one of the buildings and parks the car, then gets out before Daria can even bat an eye. After a moment Daria gets out and walks after Jane)

>Daria: Jane, where the hell are you going?

>Jane: This looks like the main office, the easiest way to find somebody would be to ask somebody in here. Don't you think?

>Daria: (sighs) Yea, ...I guess that sounds logical. Answer me this though,after three months of not seeing or hearing from a guy you only met once,why are you so hell bent on finding him.

>Jane: You've never had something pop into your head that you felt you just HAD to do?

>Daria: I guess so,but I seriously don't think it was something this impulsive. Otherwise the high school wouldn't still be standing right now.

>Jane: You know, somehow I can't really imprint that into my mind as being a GOOD thing. (The two of them walk up to the front door and into the building. The office they've just walked into looks like something that you would expect to find in middle of corporate America, ...or the movie "Office Space",you decide) . There are cubicles everywhere with people working, at the main desk there is an older man answering the phone and doing some paper work as he is talking on the phone. Jane turns to Daria and stares) You know,somehow I expected something a little different.

>Daria: You mean like there actually being an aircraft controller somewhere around here?

>Jane: Well yea, that too. I just figured a small airport like this would have red neck type people running it. (Looks around) Who knew?

>Daria: Alright,we've seen the sights. Now go ask the nice man behind the desk if he can help you find your friend. I'd like to get this over with so I can go home while my car is still intact.

>Jane: Oh you and your car,....you don't trust my driving at all do you?

>Daria: After what I just saw out on the road there,no way in hell.

>Jane: (rolls her eyes) You are SO supportive my friend. (Walks up to the front desk and the closer she comes the more the man behind the desk looks up at her) Um....excuse me?

>Man: (speaks into the phone) Hold on for a moment. (Looks at Jane again) What can I help you with?

>Jane: I was wondering if you could help me find somebody who works here. It's a guy about my height and age,dirty blond hair with blue eyes. I think he's an aircraft mechanic.

>Man: (stares at her) We've got a few people around here who do that. (Looks Jane and Daria over several times) You two aren't with the FAA or something are you? They've been known to use young people to work their way around an airport.

>Jane: (Daria and Jane exchange looks several times) No,not last time we checked. Actually I'm with the FBI and my colleague here is with the ATF. The guy I'm looking for goes by the name of Timothy Ravens. Do you know him?

>Man: (rolls his eyes at Jane's use of sarcasm and leans back in his chair and scratches his forehead) Ravens....., ...oh yea I know him.

>Jane: (stares at the man inquisitively) So.....can you tell us how to find him?

>Man: Maybe,may I ask what this is in regards to?

>Jane: We're old friends. My colleague and I were just passing through and we thought we'd stop by. You know how it is.

>Man: (stares at them both and then hands them a clipboard) Sign this please, it's a waiver stating that you are aware of the dangers of being around active aircraft. Please do not walk across the runway while your out there. (After they both sign, the man hands them a couple of visitor badges) Tim is over in hangar eleven,....go out the door here and make a right and follow that all the way down. (Daria and Jane smirk at each other and walk back out the door)

>Daria: (once outside) Is it me or is the security in this place incredibly pathetic?

>Jane: Yea, ...I know. You'd think that they would have at least wanted some I.D or something. (Laughs) And people wonder why planes crash and blow up so much these days.

>Daria: Thanks for restoring my faith there, Jane. It's a good thing I don't fly very often or I might actually be worried. (Sighs) Okay,Let's go find Mr. Ravens and get this day over with. I can only hope that you'll return to your sanity by tomorrow.

>Jane: Yea, ...yea.....everybody's a critic. (They both walk off between the buildings and after about twenty minutes they happen upon hangar eleven at the far end of the field. The large hangar doors are only halfway open and the sound of floor fans are heard running near the opening in the doors)

>Daria: Well, this is the place. Jeez, do you think they could have made this building even more remote?

>Jane: (looks around) Well, we're almost at the end of the property so I really don't think so. Unless they intend to make the highway a part of the runway. (Chuckles) Can you imagine a plane trying to land on the highway during rush hour traffic?

>Daria:: I'd rather not,There's no sense in ASKING for a potential accident to occur. (She motions for the two of them to continue into the hangar and get this whole thing over with.)

>(Cut to the inside of the hangar,in the center of the hangar is a large white HU-16 Grumman Albatross seaplane with the tail painted red. The access panel on the right engine has been removed and there is a lone person who appears to be working on the aircraft. On the ground around the aircraft is a large assortment of tools collected in several tool boxes. Jane and Daria walk along side of the aircraft and start to look around)

>Jane: (calls up to the person working on the plane) Excuse me, we're trying to find a guy who works here by the name of Timothy Ravens. Do you know where he might be? (No answer comes from the mechanic as he continues to work on the plane) (Jane and Daria exchange looks)

>Daria and Jane: (yell as loud as they can) HEY!!!!!!! (The mechanic is startled and bangs his head as he tries to pull himself out of the engine)

>Mechanic: OW,son of a....!!!! (Looks up and about until he locates Jane and Daria and responds in an extremely irritated tone of voice) For gods sake,WHAT? (Grabs a rag and starts to clean some grease off of his hands as Jane just stares up at him in recognition)

>Daria: We're looking for a mechanic who works here by the name of Timothy Ravens. (Beat) do you know him?

>Mechanic: (sighs) I should,he's me. (Climbs down from the top of the plane and walks up to Jane and Daria) What can I do for you?

>Jane: (Smirks) Hey, how's your car? Did you ever get it fixed?

>Tim: (stares in thought for a moment while snapping his fingers attempting to remember her name) Jane,isn't it?

>Jane: Aw,so you didn't forget me after all. I'm touched. (Tim laughs)

>Tim: You know,I was annoyed with you for a little while.

>Jane: Annoyed with ME, Why? What did I do?

>Daria: I'd put my money on the face painting we did.(3) I know that would have pissed me off just a little bit.

>Tim: (points his finger at Daria) No,actually that was kind of funny. I got a laugh out of that when I looked in the mirror of my rent a wreck. (Beat) No, Actually I was annoyed because I couldn't get Jane here out of my head for a good week. (Looks at Jane) I kept getting this urge to pick up the phone and call information to get your number.

>Jane: (scowls) You jerk, ...what stopped you? I kept waiting for you to show up on my door step again. (Daria looks back and forth at them a few times and rolls her eyes)

>Daria: (V.O) And here we go again.

>Tim: It was too awkward for my taste,and I thought it was just too much of a coincidence. One minute we were ready to kick each others ass and the next we were making out. That's just weird, Jane.

>Jane: (laughs) Yea,it left me just a little uncomfortable myself. Actually,I'm surprised you remember me after all this time.

>Tim: Funny, ...I was thinking the same thing. But now that you mention it,how DID you find me?

>Daria: (Cuts in) Jane here happened across your little neck of the woods and simply decided to jam on the brakes, risking our lives in the process, to come find out if you were actually here.

>Tim: (smirks) Jane,you were willing to risk your friends life just to come find me? Wow, ...I've never had anyone risk someone else's life just to come see me,... I'm honored.

>Daria: (under her breath) Jerk (out loud) Listen, I'm sure this is all well and good but you've completed your task of finding this guy, Jane. And I'm sure we're keeping Mr. Ravens from his job so why don't we get going.

>Tim: You're not keeping me from anything, I finished work a while ago. I'm on my own time right now.

>Daria: Of coarse you are. (Points her thumb at the plane) And I suppose that you're going to tell me that this plane is yours, right?

>Tim: (pats the airframe with his palm) Oh yea,this is my baby alright. It's an albatross seaplane.

>Daria: (looks the plane over) That's not a plane,it's a boat with wings and a set of tires.

>Tim: (smirks) That's the general concept of the seaplane,.....um....uh, forgive me. What IS your name anyway? I don't think I ever caught it.

>Daria: That's because I never threw it at you.

>Jane: (rolls her eyes) Tim, this is my friend Daria Morgendorffer. (Tim extends his hand to shake and after a moment Daria reluctantly

does the same.)

>Daria: (dryly) So tell us, how exactly did you manage to acquire such a money absorbing asset?

>Jane: (scowls at Daria) Daria!!?

>Tim: (shrugs) It's okay, Jane. It used to be my dad's, the air force sold bunch of these to the public for a song after they were retired from service and my dad picked one up as a restoration project. He did a sweet job on it too for the most part,that is until he dropped dead of a massive heart attack a few years ago and this lovely bird was willed to me.

>Daria: (looks ashamed of herself for asking) Oh.....um, ...I'm sorry to hear that.

>Tim: It's okay, Daria. We'd warned him for years about his smoking habits,but it just had to much of a hold on him. And for now I've pretty much finished getting her back into shape, she's FAA certified and when I'm not out for a cruise I use her to make a little money on the side. (Looks at the plane and then back at Jane and Daria) She's got a one way range of about twenty four hundred miles so I tend to get an occasional goof ball in here who needs to fly out to sea somewhere or to some remote lake up in Canada for this that or the other thing. Which tends to work out for me in other ways because the owner of the place, who happens to be one of those aforementioned goof balls, likes to fly out to this reef off of Florida once or twice a year to do some fishing. I take him and his buddies for free and he lets me keep my plane here in exchange. It saves me a heap of money in the long run which is a definite plus because maintaining this plane can tend to be rather expensive..

>Daria: Well that was a little more information that we were looking for,thanks for the life story.

>Tim: Anytime. (Turns to Jane) SO,you seem to have found my little hiding spot in the world by what seems to be an accident. Do you plan to stay long?

>Jane: Nah, that's ok. We don't want to keep you from whatever it was that you're doing.

>Tim: Actually I was already finished and was starting to clean up. I was tightening the lines on a fuel transfer pump when the two of you rang. (Looks back and forth between Daria and Jane) Do you want to take a look at her? (Jane smiles with enthusiasm while Daria wears a "I can't believe she's going to put me through this again" expression)

>(Cut to that evening. Daria has since changed her clothes and is meeting Duncan at a nice restaurant outside of Lawndale. The table is outside on a covered sort of deck overlooking a wide creek that flows maybe ten yards away from the restaurant. Daria is sitting by herself at the moment while sipping a glass of wine,.. waiting for Duncan's arrival. A waiter approaches Daria)

>Waiter: He's still not here, huh?

>Daria: He'll be here,he tends to run into some overtime at work that's all.

>Waiter: Can I get you anything in the meantime? We have a lovely calamari in a white wine sauce over linguine.

>Daria: (smirks) No thanks, I'm pretty much set as far as alcohol is concerned. (Looks past the waiter) There you are, I was beginning to worry. (The waiter turns around to see Duncan walking up looking rather well dressed.)

>Waiter: Ahsir, how are you this evening?

>Duncan: (looks at him quickly) The building went up like a roman candle,we couldn't save the bloody thing, what a shambles THAT was. (Waiter looks at him with a confused expression)

>Waiter: I'll uh, ...give you a few minutes and I'll be right back.
(walks away to tend to someone else)

>Daria: (smiles and looks at Duncan) You made yourself sound like an arsonist for a moment there.

>Duncan: (shrugs) Sorry I'm late, love. (Pulls a package from somewhere behind his back) I had to stop somewhere and pick something up for you.

>Daria: (takes the package and opens it) Roses....? Duncan,you've never been one to be seen in a florist shop. What brought this on?

>Duncan: (shrugs) The shop just happened to be right across the street from the building we were working on. Besides, I figured it would be a nice surprise for you.

>Daria: (raises an eyebrow) Well at least I can rest assured that these were thoroughly watered before you got here.

>Duncan: Aye,...considering how much time we spend spraying the stuff on a building it seems only natural that we could spare some for a few flowers. If we can't make this place a little greener for the ones we love then what the bloody hell are we here for?

>Daria: To make life a living hell for the ones we DON'T of coarse. (Moves to smell the flowers and then remembers Kevin and Brittany a few years back) Uh ...Duncan, you did check these for bees right? (Duncan bursts out laughing) (A short time later the waiter returns and takes their order and lights a candle at the center of the table) (Daria looks about at the scenery and lets out a sigh) So why the need for a romantic setting all of a sudden?

>Duncan: No real NEED, ...I just thought it would be nice for a change. I'd just like to take that extra step every now and again to make sure your happy.

>Daria: (raises an eyebrow) You don't need roses and a fancy restaurant to make me happy, Duncan. (Pauses) But they are appreciated,thank you. (Sighs) But....as long as we're on the topic of relationships,Do you remember me telling you about that guy who's car Jane wrecked a while back?

>Duncan: (thinks for a moment) Vaguely,why do you ask?

>Daria: Jane and I met up with him again today,one minute we're heading home from graduation and the next Jane is slamming on the breaks because she's suddenly decided to go off on a mission to find this guy.

>Duncan: Sounds just a tad obsessive. So....did she find the guy?

>Daria: (Shakes her head) As if someone had PLANNED it that way. (Sighs) The next thing I know it's Tom all over again.

>Duncan: (scowls for a moment) Tom...? (The waiter returns and they pause the conversation long enough to order and the waiter leaves)

>Daria: (reaches over and pats his hand) A past boyfriend who dropped Jane for me and then dropped me for someone else,it's nothing for you to worry about, it's long since over with. But what I was trying to get at is how fast Jane moves with guys. I swear it's going to get her into trouble someday. This guy Tim,the person Jane hit a while back, ..it's like they're magnets or something. They met each other only ONCE,didn't see each other for three months and the second they come face to face it's like I'm in the way.

>Duncan: You can't possibly mean that,you and Jane have been friends for years. I honestly can't see her treating you like a third wheel.

>Daria: Oh no,that came later. What I meant was it was LITERALLY

like I was in the way,like a control rod in a reactor. The second I pulled myself out of the equation,....the sparks flew.

>Duncan: (stares blankly at Daria) Um.....lass, I think you might have to simplify that one for me. What exactly ARE you getting at?

>Daria: Well,It's like this. Jane and I are talking in the airplane hangar where Tim was working. And things were going ok,Jane was being annoying but it was still okay. Tim started to show us around this plane he's got,...outside and in. And there was nothing to it, ...I figure if I'm ever in the market for a cross between a boat with wings and a motor home then I'll know where to go. (Removes her glasses and starts to clean them with her sleeve) Anyway, ... I left the plane and when I turned around,neither of them were behind me. So I went back into the plane and the two of them are pressed against the airframe sucking down each others tonsils.

>Duncan: (Again staring at Daria blankly) That has GOT to be the most I've ever heard come out of your mouth at one time. (Whistles slightly) I'm glad you don't ramble on like that all the time, ...I've kind of grown fond of the way you always get to the point of things.

>Daria: (looks slightly embarrassed) Oh god,I was wasn't I....?

>Duncan: Aye,but I was able to sift through it and figure out what you were getting at. And I have to admit,that does seem a bit on the speedy side. (Sighs) My advice is to let things run their course and don't let it get to you. She may be a bit distracted for a while but friends like you and Jane never forget about each other.

>Daria: (raises an eyebrow) So you think I should just let her enjoy herself and hope she doesn't get hurt?

>Duncan: (shrugs) It's her life, lass. Besides, people who appear to be opposites are sometimes a lot more alike than anybody may think.

>Daria: (As the waiter arrives with their food) Duncan,at some point you're going to have to point out just how exactly those two could possibly be alike. If Jane ever has you meet the guy that is. (Duncan smirks and they both begin to enjoy their food)

>Duncan: (swallows his first bite) So in the end at least you both got home okay?

>Daria: (pauses for a long moment)Not exactly. I got a little pissed off when Jane and Tim started yapping away like I wasn't even there. I guess I decided that if she needed a way home that badly then he could take her. (Duncan looks up from his plate at Daria and smirks)

>Duncan: So I take it that this was the downside of your day?

>Daria: You're perceptive Mr. Macleod, in light of your recent discovery do you think you could discover the upside of my day?

>Duncan: Leaving Jane at the airport...?

>Daria: Funny, ...I thought you had designated that point as the downside of my day.

>Duncan: No lass, ...I designated Jane turning her attention away from you as the downside of your day. If I know you as well as I think I do, ...then you probably justified leaving her at the airport with righteous indignation. Therefore you probably enjoyed it, making it the upside of your day.

>Daria: (frowns) Aren't you supposed to be on my side about things like this?

>Duncan: I AM on your side lass,I'm just telling it like I see it that's all. You're just a tad possessive about your friendship with her. And as a result you get just a little testy whenever somebody threatens to steal any of her time away from you, just like with Tom.

>Daria: Wait, ...I never actually told you about Tom. I just mentioned him here and there. So how did you hear about that?

>Duncan: (Laughs) Jane had filled me in on him shortly after you and I told everyone that we were together, ...why do you think I never got just a little jealous whenever you mentioned this past boyfriend of yours?

>Daria: (Shrugs) I just thought that you were an extremely rare and decent guy who could deal with such things. So are you saying that I was WRONG about that?

>Duncan: Not at all, ...on the whole I'm just proving that I know more about you than you think. Sometimes I even happen to know HOW you think?

>Daria: (Smirks) Congratulations,even my mother couldn't figure that one out. You must have worked VERY hard on that one.

>Duncan: Nope, ...I just cared enough to listen when you talked, ...and maybe do a background check on you here and there.

>Daria: (crosses her arms over her chest) I HOPE you at least went through the CIA to do it, ...those guys in the FBI and Secret Service tend to do such a sloppy job these days. They actually want MONEY in exchange for national secrets,I mean how sloppy is THAT? The dollar isn't worth what is used to be you know.

>Duncan: Note to self, ...never use cash to buy national secrets. (Smirks) I'm glad your not mad that I checked up on you.

>Daria: (Sighs) No, ...I guess it was to be expected. And with all the weirdo's out there these days it was probably the safer thing to do.

>Duncan: What, you mean you didn't do the same thing to me?

>Daria: What are you nuts? I've got your entire file in my computer desk. (Duncan laughs)

>Duncan: So getting back to the previous subject,....for all we know Jane's still stuck at that rinky dink little airport for the night with a guy she barely knows. (the scene flashes back to the airplane hangar. Jane and Tim are seen inside the aircraft on the floor sleeping in each others arms, and then a moment later flashes back to the restaurant.)

>Daria: (Sighs) Trying to make use of that conscience I don't have are you?

>Duncan: Not at all,I figure you'll do that all on your own sooner or later.

>Daria: (sighs) And this was turning out to be such a nice evening. (Takes a bite of her food)

>(Cut to the next morning,Daria is standing on the doorstep at Duncan's house as he opens the door. He is fully dressed and looks as if he's been expecting her)

>Daria: Hey Duncan. Let's just cut to the point, ..you know that conscience that I don't have?

>Duncan: It got to you, ...I thought that it might. Did you try to call Jane's house to see if she made it home at all?

>Daria: Yea,Trent said that she called last night to let him know that she was okay. But I still can't help but feel a little guilty about it.

>Duncan: So Jane didn't ask for a ride home huh?

>Daria: Not unless Trent just forgot to tell me,... but somehow I don't think that he did.

>Duncan: (shrugs) So what then, do you want to go back there and see what happened between them?

>Daria: Yea, ...do you feel like coming with me?

>Duncan: I didn't get dressed for nothing. Let's go, ...we'll take my truck. If we end up bringing Jane back with us then she can ride in the middle this time. (Daria chuckles) It's about time she got the shaft.

>(Daria and Duncan leave in the truck and head out using the directions Daria remembered coming back from the airport the day before. It takes about an hour to get back up there and once they do Daria and Duncan go through the same song and dance as Jane and Daria had done the day before. They walk to the hangar only to find that it is empty and the doors are wide open)

>Daria: I don't believe it, ... Jane really DID go flying with the guy? She barely knows him, ..how can she trust him to be a good pilot?

>Duncan: Who knows, ...but there's not much we can do about it right now but to head on home and wait for her to call for a ride.

>Daria: (scowls) This sucks,Jane's left me hanging because of some guy AGAIN. What is our friendship coming to?

>Duncan: If I recall correctly,you were the one who left her here last night. So who left WHO hanging?

>Daria: (scowls) Oh be quiet, ...can't you see I'm trying to justify my own stupidity?

>Duncan: (Smirks) Come on, ...you can finish kicking yourself on the way back home. Do you want a bigger boot to do it with? (Daria scowls at him as they turn to head back to the truck)

>(Cut to the cockpit of Tim's plane as it heads east from the airport. Tim is busy flying the aircraft while wearing a set of earphones with a hands free Mic attached. Jane who is riding shotgun just stares out the nearest window as she watches the ground and everything on it, which appears much smaller from this perspective, pass underneath)

>Tim: (looks at Jane for a moment) Are you okay there, Jane? You look kind of distant, ...you're not afraid to fly or something are you?

>Jane: (turns to look at him) Huh,oh no. I've flown countless times, ...it's just that the pilot was usually a professional that's all.

>Tim: I'm not a bad pilot, Jane. I've got over five hundred hours of flight time under my belt and I'm qualified to fly by instrument and sight in all weather,....so where's the problem?

>Jane: No problem,so long as we don't descend to the earth in a spiraling fireball that is.

>Tim: (glances at her briefly) Oh well in THAT case, ...keep your eyes peeled for any missiles coming up from the ground. We don't need a repeat of flight eight hundred now do we.

>Jane: (Smirks) You've got electronic countermeasures on this thing do you?

>Tim: (Smiles) Not unless you count that small fridge in the back as some sort of a decoy. (Jane laughs as she turns her attention back towards the passenger side window) So we've ruled out fear of flying,what's on your mind then?

>Jane: (tries to play it off) Nothing important.

>Tim: Somehow I doubt that, come on... give. Is it really all that much of a trust thing? I thought I had done a pretty good job at proving that I could be trusted last night.

>Jane: It's not a trust thing,I do trust you. And it's that very fact that's weirding me out,I barely know you.

>Tim: Yea, ...and I barely know you too. But you have to admit, ...we get along pretty well.

>Jane: I'll say,We meet by accident....literally, and we almost kick each others ass. The next thing we know we're all over each other. After that we don't see each other for months and out of the blue I'm prompted to come looking for you and then we're all over each other again, ...only this time my friend got pissed and left me behind with you only to have us end up on an airplane together.

>Tim: I'm sure your friend won't hold a grudge against you for making her feel left out,you two have been friends this long so you've been telling me. So I don't think she's going to go anywhere.

>Jane: I'm sure she'll get over it too, ...we've survived worse threats to our friendship. That's the small part of what's on my mind,The larger part is our unexplained spontaneous attraction to each other. I mean we have absolutely JACK in common. Where's the attraction coming from?

>Tim: You've got me, ...but you have to admit it IS rather fun while it lasts. Who knows,maybe it's just a physical thing and if you really want it'll pass and we'll be back to trying to kick each others ass in no time flat. I can't think of a single thing that we have in common either if that makes you feel any better.

>Jane: (smirks) Not really,but thanks anyway. I dunno,maybe if you had a car with a roof that was rusting through or something then maybe this would be easier to absorb.

>Tim: You've got a thing for rusted out shit-boxes, huh?

>Jane: Hey, ...I'm up here flying with you aren't I?

>Tim: (scowls) Now that's just COLD, Jane. You won't find a bit of rust on this baby! She fly's like a dream,and to prove it I want you to take the yoke.

>Jane: (glares) Say WHAT?

>Tim: Take the yoke,It's easy. The hardest part is landing and the actual navigation. Neither of which you'll have to do at the moment,...just keep us from crashing into that blue green body of water that just passed beneath us that's commonly referred to as the Atlantic ocean.

>Jane: Tim, ...when I said I've flown countless times I meant just as an ignorant passenger. I can't fly this thing.

>Tim: (lets go of the yoke and the nose of the plane starts to dip down slightly) I guess we're going down the hard way then. Unless you feel like taking over that is.

>Jane: (Stares harshly at him and then grabs the yoke and pulls back. The plane jerks upward sending Tim back into his seat and then the plane tilts steeply from side to side a few times) Dammit, ...tell me what to do!!

>Tim: (holding on to something) First off take it easy, ...make slow even movements. (Grabs the yoke on his side and helps Jane even the plane out) Now,keep the plane level. Look at the instrument panel, ...do you see the artificial horizon?

>Jane: The ball with the red and blue halves, ..right?

>Tim: That's the one, ...now keep it level and center it up with the bar in the middle. Make sure the blue side is on top please.

>Jane: And if it isn't?

>Tim: We'd be upside down, Jane. Under the circumstances that would be bad, I've got a lot of stuff in the back that would come crashing to the ceiling. Besides, ...this thing wasn't really designed for acrobatics. (Lets go of his yoke again and lets Jane fly on her own) See, ...it's not so hard. Now you took us a bit off course there so look down at the console and find the digital compass. It should be in the center slightly on the left,got it?

>Jane: Yea, ...I think that's it. What now?

>Tim: We should be on course one five nine,but the compass seems to be reading zero nine zero. So I want you to turn very slightly to the left until that compass reads one five nine. (Jane begins to turn into a steep bank) I said SLIGHTLY!!!!

>Jane: Don't be a back seat pilot for gods sake. (Jane tries to even the plane out again and after wagging the wings a bit trying to level off, she succeeds) There,hey you were right. This IS easy.

>Tim: (Takes the yoke back) I'll take it from here if you don't mind.

>Jane: (chuckles and then spies the gas gauge which is reading E and gawks) Oh my god,are we almost out of gas???

>Tim: (looks at the gauge and the taps it sending the needle to the full mark) That thing seems to stick every now and then after refueling, ...I should probably replace it as soon as I get the chance.

>Jane: (irritated) You THINK? Damn, ...every time I turn around I think you're about to get us killed by an act of stupidity.

>Tim: Yea, ...I was having second thoughts about letting you fly too. But I lived to learn from my mistakes so there's no harm done.

>Jane: Hey now, ...I didn't do such a bad job. It was actually sort of fun. (Tim laughs) What...?

>Tim: I found something we have in common, ...we both like to have fun.

>Jane: (smirks) Well I'll be damned,we do don't we. (Sighs) Well there's one strike for you, ..two more and you're out. And you know what THAT means.

>Tim: Yea,we won't be able to risk each others lives to get a cheap thrill anymore.

>Jane:I guess we'll just have to find all NEW cheap thrills to entertain ourselves with. (Sighs) There's got to be something else we have in common besides hormones and an occasional quest for a cheap thrill. I don't suppose you have any interest in art do you?

>Tim: What you mean like abstract stuff,or Vangogh and Picasso?

>Jane: (stares at him and smirks) Take your pick.

>Tim: (scratches his chin in thought) Well in all honesty,I know absolutely JACK about famous artists other than a passing familiarity with some of their names. But,I think I've got a pretty good handle on turning airplane parts into an abstract art like substance. If you can actually call that art.

>Jane: Now that's unique, most people just get lazy and stand behind the engine of a jet and let all that hot air blow paint onto a canvas. At the very least you could say that your original,got anything you can show me?

>Tim: Nothing I can pull out of my rear end at this very moment, ...but maybe when we get back. There's this one piece I made during a

prolonged bout of boredom,I used an old Barbie doll I found and a couple of spark plug wires to create this thing that looks like someone in the electric chair. I call it Barbie's TRUE dream. (Jane laughs)

>Jane: Barbie on death row,now there's something I'd like to see. I always hated those dolls even when I was old enough to play with them. My mom gave me one when I was five and instead of testing makeup on it, ...I painted custom tatoo's all over it's plastic little body. Even over it's plastic little private parts.

>Tim: (smirks) Now there's self expression in it's truest form. Prison inmate Barbie, ...the next in childhood evolution.

>Jane: What a shame it could never be marketed, ...I bet it would have sold like wildfire.

>Tim: No doubt,even maniacal serial killers need to have something to nurture their inner psychopath with.

>Jane: (grins) Thus making the world a far better place to live in. (sighs) I guess we're more alike then we originally thought,who knew?

>Tim: If the universe works the way I think it does,probably millions of people who are watching our every movement on a tv screen as we speak. You know the kind I mean,bored and useless people with nothing better to do with their day.

>Jane: (leans toward the front windshield and looks out, waving as she does so) Hi mom! (Tim laughs)

>(Cut to the shore around midday, ...Maria is sitting on a towel on the sand in a one piece grey bathing suit, ...her canine companion Cheyenne as always is sitting close by. Meanwhile Trent is standing behind Maria wrestling with a large beach umbrella as he tries to get it all the way open and then to stand upright in the sand on it's own.)

>Trent: Geez, ...you'd think sugar sand would be easier to shove a pole into. (After a moment he manages to get the umbrella to stand upright on it's own.)

>Maria: (chuckles) The heat on my back and shoulders disappeared, ...so I take it you got the umbrella back up.

>Trent: (Uses his hand to wipe his forehead) Yea,I think it should stay this time.

>Maria: And you managed to avoid stabbing yourself in the foot this time around, ...that's a good thing I think.

>Trent: (frowns) Hey,I make it a point to learn from my mistakes. Besides, ...the bleeding stopped a good while ago.

>Maria: It should do you some good when you go in the water,the salt will serve to sterilize the wound so it doesn't get infected. It's going to hurt like hell though, ..so be warned.

>Trent: (lifts an eyebrow) How do you know so much?

>Maria: I read everything I can get brailled, ...including medical journals. I'm just glad I can't see the things those journals describe. That stuff sounds like it could get to look pretty disgusting.

>Trent: I would guess so. (Looks at the nearby surf) So when do you want to go in? I know how much you love the ocean.

>Maria: In a bit, ...(pats the towel she is sitting on) Have a seat, Trent. (Trent has a seat next to her and Maria takes a deep breath of the salty air) I want to see the ocean someday, Trent. If this procedure I get to go through works,I want to see it. I don't care if it's only shapes and shadows, ...it'll be more than I've got now and that in itself is a memory that will last lifetimes.

>Trent: (Scratches the back of his neck uneasily) So you want it to be the first thing you see if this thing works?

>Maria: (Smirks and turns in his direction and begins to run her fingers over Trent's facial features) Of coarse not,the ocean will always be here. What I want to see first is everyone I care about gathered around me. I want to try to figure out who's who before anyone speaks. (Beat) You will be there when it happens, ...won't you?

>Trent: (reaches up and runs his fingers through her long red hair that extends halfway down her back which for once Maria doesn't have tied back with a scrunchie.) I'll camp out in your room until you come around from the anesthesia. Just be sure to describe every little sensation to me, ...I don't want to miss a moment of any of it. (Trent leans forward and gives her a kiss)

>Maria: (smiles) You won't, because chances are that our wedding date will come long before my eye surgery does. Which means that since you'll be my husband, ...It's legally permissible for me to kick your ass if you do. (Beat) Speaking of said wedding date, which is I recall is but a mere six months away now that we've officially set one as of this morning. I'm going to get fitted for my dress next week,I think my mom's more excited about it than I am. She was talking about when we were going to set the date all last night and as soon as I told her after we settled on one this morning she was asking me where I wanted to go to get fitted. I just wanted to snap and scream for her to shut the hell up so I could think for a minute.

>Trent: Whoa,I'm glad you warned me that you've got temper. I should make it a point never to suggest that you go out and buy a dress. Oh wait,you hate dresses. I guess that explains why you wanted to snap at your mom then.

>Maria: (Laughs) As soon as I put that dress on I'll have to learn how to walk all over again. If I manage to make it up the aisle without tripping at least half a dozen times I'll be freaking amazed.

>Trent: (Laughcoughs) We'd better pad all of the furniture then, ...we don't want you to hurt yourself and dirty that nice white dress.

>
Maria: You know if anyone knew otherwise, ...I don't think I'd be getting a completely WHITE dress. I Think I lost most of my purity a long time back.

>
Trent: (Interested) Hey,I'm sure there's still a little purity left in you. You have to save SOMETHING for the wedding night you know.

>
Maria: (smirks) Oh shut up,and rub some lotion on my back while your shutting up. I burn easily even if we ARE under an umbrella. (She turns to lie face down on the towel and moves her bathing suit straps down from her shoulders)

>
Trent: One complimentary back rub, ...with extra lotion coming up. (Trent squirts lotion on his hands and begins to rub into Maria's back)

>
(Cut to Jane and Tim. Tim has since landed his plane approximately fifty miles off shore,the sea's are remarkably calm on this day. As they both get up out of their seats to walk about the plane, Jane stops to look out a side window and notices that there is no land in sight nor are there any other water craft around)

>
Jane: Um, ...how far out are we anyway?

>
Tim: About fifty miles or so, ...why?

>
Jane: I was just a little concerned, ...I can't see land anymore, and there's nobody else out here

>
Tim: You shouldn't be able to, ...not this far out at least. And of course there isn't, ...it would have been too dangerous to try to land close to pleasure boaters.

>
Jane: And what was your reason for landing again? I thought this was just supposed to be a short maintenance flight, ...after which we would return to the safety of the airport.

>
Tim: I never made mention to the duration of the flight,and it IS a maintenance flight. But for the moment I decided to make a stop so you could walk about the plane and we could have lunch or something.

>
Jane: (crosses her arms across her chest) Your kidding,YOU brought lunch? So I take it you had planned this little pit stop of yours?

>
Tim: (frowns) No, it was a spur of the moment thing, and I ALWAYS bring something to eat with me when I go flying,(looks Jane up and down) I never know what I might be hungry for from one moment to the next.

>
Jane: (Frowns) Don't you even think about getting weird on me Mr. Ravens.

>
Tim: (chuckles) Relax Jane,... I was just seeing what sort of reaction I'd get from you. (Walks up to a consol between the two front seats and lifts a small hatch and takes out several sandwiches as well as a couple cans of soda and hands one of each to Jane)

>
Jane: And just how LONG are we going to stay here?

>
Tim: (Shrugs) As long as you like, ...we can leave NOW if you want. I just thought it would be nice to stop for a while and get to know each other better. We've gotten off to a great start so far don't you think?

>
Jane: Depends on your point of view,my best friend left me here last night with you, ... as I mentioned before, I imagine because she got pissed that I was paying more attention to you than I was to her.

>
Tim: She's the Possessive type is she?

>
Jane: Not as much as you might think,she's not to the point where she would go around referring to me as her bitch or anything. So I picture that as a plus.

>
Tim: (makes a so..so gesture with his hand) So your friend's a little

>
Jane: STRAIGHT as they go my friend, I just wanted to see what sort of reaction I could get out of YOU. Although I must admit, ...I myself have been told that I give off a sort of gay vibe here and there. But don't let that fool you,I like GUYS.

>
Tim: That's always a comfort to know. Straight is great, ...Bi I can deal with, flat out gay I have a small problem with as far as relationships involving me go. Granted this applies souly to the opposite sex just to keep any deranged ideas from popping into that little head of yours.

>
Jane: (Winks and points a finger at Tim) Right then, ...as long as we've touched base on that.

>
Tim: (walks to the door on the side of the aircraft and opens it, the immediate area inside is blinded with sunlight as he does so) You want to climb up onto the wings for a bit? The view is great from up there, ...I should know. I spend a lot of time up there maintaining the engines.

>
Jane: Not to sound pessimistic there my friend, but if you leave that door open like that, isn't there a slight chance that the sea might opt to come in and check the place out. Thereby sending your little aircraft down to the bottom of the sea?

>
Tim: (Smirks) Not likely, ...We're still standing a few feet

above the water and the seas are relatively calm today. Now come on, ...just follow my lead, we'll eat up on top of the wings. The worst that can happen is that somebody falls in and goes swimming.

>
Jane: No, the worst that can happen is that if I end up swimming I'll become an artistic feast for the inbred relatives of Jaws. It's not exactly a thought I cherish at night.

>
Tim: Hey, ...you said yourself that we need all new cheep thrills to entertain ourselves with. You can't get any more inexpensive than becoming a free lunch for sharks.

>
Jane: (Shakes her head) There's something inherently wrong with your logic. But, ...so be it. I AM in need of a new cheap thrill. (Moves to follow Tim Out the door and as she tries to climb up onto the wings. She loses her foothold and falls into the water with a large splash) (spits out some salt water as she comes back to the surface) Dammit,I TOLD you this would happen. Now get me the hell out of here!

>
Tim: (calls from on top of the wings) Hey take it this way, ...at least there are no sharks around.

>
Jane: Hey don't jinx me, dammit. (irritated) Well don't just stand there, ...help me out of the water. Do you have any idea how hard it is to tread water wearing boots?

>
Tim: So lose the boots already. (Climbs back down off the wings to the door of the plane. After a moment of acting like an injured fish Jane manages to work her boots off one at a time and throws them at Tim followed by her red jacket.) Hey uh,...not to sound like a typical guy or anything but are you going to keep that up? Because I don't think I have any sort of swim wear that you might be able to use to cover yourself. (Jane flips him off and then swims closer to the plane. As Tim reaches out to help her out of the water, Jane grabs him and pulls him in)

>
Jane: There, ...now we're even so start tossing your stuff before YOU sink.

>
Tim: (Shakes some of the water from his hair) It's a good thing we're not caught in some sort of current or the plane would be off on the horizon by now and we'd be SWIMMING home. (He goes through the same routine Jane does and pulls his sneakers off and then tosses them through the door of the plane.) So much for sunning ourselves on top of the wings I guess.

>
Jane: (smirks and splashes him) Just keep an eye out for sharks.

>
Tim: That works I guess, ... if YOU make sure the plane doesn't float too far away.

>
Jane: Deal.

>
(Fade to much later in the day. The sun is just now beginning to dip below the horizon casting an orange glow across the expanse of ocean ahead. Jane and Tim are sitting next to each other on top of the wings of the plane watching the sun as it sets)

>
Jane: You know I hate to admit it but it is rather nice up here.

>
Tim: (looks at Jane and smirks) Your not just saying that because we're both in our underwear are you?

>
Jane: (Laughs) Well, ...there's that too. It's a good thing you wear boxers,personally I think you'd look down right hilarious in tighty whities.

>
Tim: I think if I were wearing briefs, ...as wet as we are now, they would be transparent. Which I think would be most embarrassing don't you?

>
Jane: (Smiles) What's the matter,not well endowed?

>
Tim: (makes an odd facial expression) And to think earlier in the day you were questioning whether or not we had anything in common,now look. We're sitting on top of my plane wearing nothing but our undergarments.

>
Jane: (shrugs) Our clothes were made of mostly cotton, ...who knew how much water they'd soak up. (Bursts out laughing) I keep thinking of how we would swim about until something would get too heavy and then at almost the same time we'd shed a particular article of clothing and toss it into the plane, then swim around until we didn't feel like carrying something else and we'd shed another piece of our dignity.

>
Tim: (Shakes his head) They did get pretty heavy didn't they. But for the life of me I can't figure out why you just didn't get out of the water. If I recall you were the one fearing a shark attack.

>
Jane: (sighs) My guess is that deep down I was having too much fun. And so were you if I'm not mistaken.

>
Tim: You think we were having too much fun swimming?

>
Jane: Either that or too much fun watching each other get tired and strip one piece of clothing at a time.

>
Tim: Huh,well I'll say one thing. Fun sure has a nifty way of helping a person to lose any inhibitions.

>
Jane: Hey now, ...don't get cocky. I said I had fun watching you strip and tread water at the same time. Don't mistake that for some sort of invitation for sex!!

>
Tim: The thought never crossed my mind. But I do have to admit that it was fun watching you as well.

>
Jane: (Shrugs) Okay, I guessI sort of feel better about the whole thing now. BUT.... If you tell ANYBODY that we did any of that or that you saw me like this, ...I'll rip your sack off and use it for a paper towel. (Tim cringes at this)

>
Tim: I guess your secrets safe with me then.

>
Jane: (smiles and reaches over to pull him close) Keep it that way. (Looks at the sun as it continues to dip below the horizon) I have to admit,coming out here wasn't such a bad idea.

>
Tim: "Don't worry, ...I won't let it go to my head."

>
Jane: (Smirks) A fan of "The Princess Bride" are we?

>
Tim: (smirks and pretends to draw a sword) "Hello, ...my name is Indigo Montoya",you killed my boss. Prepare to be paid!

>
Jane: And an ad libber to boot I see. (Tim smiles at this and to his surprise receives a light kiss from Jane as the top edge of the sun disappears below the horizon) I like it when guys can make things up as they go.

>
Tim: (sighs) Hey, ..sometimes that's the only way to get ANYWHERE .

>
(Cut to late that same evening inside Daria's apartment, Daria is busy flipping through the channels on the Tv while Duncan is in the kitchen heating up whatever leftovers they had brought home from the restaurant earlier in the day.)

>
Daria: Geez,I can't believe how scarce airings of sick sad world have become. As far as I know they haven't canceled it yet.

>
Duncan: (Calls from the kitchen) Maybe they're just running out of sick sad things to tell you about.

>
Daria: Do you REALLY believe that this pathetic world we exist in will ever run out of brain dead idiots with which we could amuse

ourselves with?

>
Duncan: (walks out into the living room to join Daria)
No,...these days if there is one thing there ISN'T a shortage
of,...it's brain dead morons. In fact I think there's a surplus of
those people. (Sighs) Well then maybe people in general are just
getting bored with it all and would rather just ignore the sick and
sad. Hell they ignore everything else don't they? It's like people
have a bloody neutral zone about their heads if you ask me.

>
Daria: Well, whatever the reason.... I think it sucks. That's my
favorite show,Jane and I used to sit around for hours vegetating
in front of the tube while we laughed and the stupid things people do
with their lives. Damn,I miss those days.

>
Duncan: Aye, ...nothing beats the old days does it. In the new
days you have to go out and go to college, ...get a job. God forbid
you should have time for family, ...or to have one should you so
decide. Aye, ...the days of adolescence were a lot less stressful.
(Thinks for a moment) Okay, ..maybe not LESS stressful. Just
stressful in a slightly more tolerable manner.

>
Daria: (stops to think for a moment) Isn't it weird how we're
both in our twenties and yet we're already talking about the old days
as if we were eighty something?

>
Duncan: To be honest I never really stopped to think about it
that much. But I guess you're right, ..I imagine we just talk that
way because so much has changed over the years from what we remember
while growing up.

>
Daria: Changes,oh I could go on about changes. Everything
is completely different from what it once was in high school. Jane
and I used to be inseparable, ...nothing could get between us. And
now look, ..she's taken off somewhere with a guy she's met maybe once
or twice before.

>
Duncan: You have to stop worrying about that so much, lass.
Jane's got her own life to live, ..as do you. That's not going to
effect your friendship with her. It'll just add a few more variables
to the matter. Meeting this guy seems to be one of those variables,
...maybe something will com of it like what happened with you and I.
Then again maybe it won't,...the point is you can't monopolize her
time the way you used to. Life just doesn't work that way.

>
Daria: (Scowls) You don't think I know that?

>
Duncan: I'm sure you're aware of it, ...I'm just saying that
most of the changes wether you like them or not, you'll just have to
grin and bear. Take my sister and Trent, ...at first I didn't like
the idea that she was dating someone I thought would never amount to
anything. But...she loves him, and as such there's nothing I can do
to change it so I just have to accept it.

>
Daria: He has turned his life around you know. He used to sleep
most of his life away while living from one gig to the next.

>
Duncan: Aye granted, and now he's got a good job, sleeps normal
hours, and is marrying my sister. I never thought this would happen,
...but yet it's another thing I just have to accept.

>
Daria: Alright, ...I get the point. Whatever Jane want to do is
her business and I just have to deal with it, like it or not. (Sighs)
And what about us, is that something that we just have to deal with
as well?

>
Duncan: Do you mean are we going to end up like Trent and Maria,
...eventually getting married that is.

>
Daria: Let's hold off on the "M" word, ...it's churning my
stomach as it is.

>
Duncan: Then this should serve to settle the thing, ...I haven't been giving it any thought as of late. So I doubt the subject should even come up for a good while.

>
Daria: (sighs) That's a relief,...I have a hard enough time thinking about everyone going their separate ways as the years pass by.

>
Duncan: Feel better?

>
Daria: (mocks him) Aye... (The phone rings and Duncan moves to pick up)

>
Duncan: (into the receiver) Aye, what's up?

>
Trent: Um...hey Duncan, what's up?

>
Duncan: Didn't I just ask you the same bloody thing?

>
Trent: Whoa,take it easy. I was just trying to say hi,at least I think I was. I might have actually been posing one of those hypothetical questions to myself,I can never tell sometimes.

>
Duncan: Um...right then,so what did you want?

>
Trent: Um.....have you heard from Janie? I know she called early this morning but I figured she'd be home and all by now.

>
Duncan: Not a peep, ...but strangely enough Daria and I were just discussing that same subject.

>
Trent: Whoa,what a coincidence. But anyway if you guys see or hear from her before I do could you like, give me a call or something? I'm a little worried, ...it's not like her to stay out so late. You know?

>
Duncan: Right then, ...I think I can handle that. Drop you a line if we catch word on Jane, ...no problem. So how's my sister doing?

>
Trent: Pretty cool, ...we went down to the shore today for a bit. She got that call and she just wanted to do something to celebrate.

>
Duncan: She never mentioned anything about a phone call worth celebrating over. Who was it and what was it about?

>
Trent: Well uh, ...it was supposed to be a surprise. She wanted to tell you guys herself and all, ...you know how she can be.

>
Duncan: (slightly irritated) I'll act surprised,now give with the bloody info already. (Trent begins to give with the details about the phone call from the opthamologist and after Trent was finally winded enough to hang up, Duncan went back to talking with Daria and fed her the news)

>
Daria: Well I'll be damned, ...I hope all goes well.

>
Duncan; Aye so do I, lass.

>
Daria: (Lifts an eyebrow) So where were we again?

>
Duncan: We were discussing how things have changed over the years, and the fact that Jane doesn't give you as much of her time as she used to. An example being that she runs off occasionally with a guy and doesn't call for a day or so at a time because of it. .

>
Daria: Oh yea, ...I hate getting side tracked like that. It just ruins the whole worrying mood.

>
Duncan: (Smiles) You didn't get side tracked lass, ...you forget how well I know you. In an odd and twisted sort of way you were actually glad that you weren't the only one that she hadn't called. It makes it easier for you to believe that Jane isn't mad at you.

>
Daria: Oh COME on, you know I would never be that shallow. I'm just as concerned as Trent is, ...Jane IS my best friend you know.

>
Duncan: Whom you abandoned at a small airport because you felt cheated out of her time.

>
Daria: (scowls) Can we get PAST that please, ...I'm having a hard enough time accepting the fact that I acted that way,again. (Sighs) So where do you think she could be?

>
Duncan: (sighs) I have no idea lass, but wherever she disappeared to I doubt it had anything to do with you. Most likely she is still with that Tim guy and for all we know having the time of her life. You said yourself that there was some sort of weird attraction going on between them.

>
Daria: (gives Duncan an odd look) I NEVER actually thought I would hate being right. (Thinks for a moment) Funny, ...now that I think about it the thought of Jane sitting off somewhere having a lot of fun without me is actually mind settling. If they ARE getting along well, then maybe what I did was a good thing. I dunno,I still think it was all happening too fast though.

>
Duncan: Daria, ...you thought that you and I were happening too fast. And look how we turned out. It's just that you and Jane have different ideas on just what moving too fast IS.

>
Daria: (pulls her glasses off and begins to clean them with her sleeve) How do you manage to do that?

>
Duncan: What's that, love?

>
Daria: Manage to make sense out of everything.

>
Duncan: (looks smug) It's just a gift I guess, ...you know how it is with me.

>
Daria: (mocking him) Aye...

>
(Fade to Tim's plane floating with the currents in the Atlantic. It is night time and the sky is clear with an ever present full moon casting it's dull white glow over the water as far as the eye can see. Jane and Tim are still sitting on top of the wings together, they have since gotten dressed again after enough time had passed to suitably dry their clothes off.)

>
Tim: How long have we been sitting up here now?

>
Jane: That depends, ...are we counting the ten minutes we spent inside the plane checking to see if our clothes were dry yet? Or the hour we spent delaying our getting dressed by hiding pieces of each others clothing?

>
Tim: You're not still mad about the bra are you? I swear that was an accident, ...the hooks got caught on your shirt when I went to hide it from you.

>
Jane: (Laughs) Relax, ...I wasn't mad about that in the first place. Embarrassed as all hell yes, but not mad. Which reminds me, ...I should probably get even with you for that.

>
Tim: I thought you said you weren't mad about it.

>
Jane: I'm not, ...but that doesn't mean I can't get you for it later anyway. After all, ...you ARE the first guy to see me like that. I think that justifies retribution, ...don't you?

>
Tim: Not really,but then my opinion would probably hardly count in such a matter would it?

>
Jane: (crosses her arms about her chest) Not really.

>
Tim: Just checking. (Gives Jane a peck on the cheek) So are you about ready to get out of here?

>
Jane: Aww, ...are you sick of my company already?

>
Tim: (smirks) Hell no, ...I could spend days at a time with you and probably not get bored. The only problem with that train of thought is the fact that we ate all of the food in the cooler.

Remember, this was originally supposed to be a routine maintenance flight. I hadn't planned on stopping so I didn't pack much food away.

>
Jane: Really...? Wow, ...that's the first time a guy actually wanted to spend days at a time with me. Even my former boyfriend Tom wanted to go home every now and then.

>
Tim: Home is wherever you choose to hang your hat for the night. Me, ..I can sleep just about anywhere and not take up much space. Oh sure, if you and I hung out together ...you might find me in your fridge every now and again and you could always introduce me to your family as the mystery guy who ties up the bathroom in the morning but I'd be in and out of your hair in a jiffy. (Jane offers no reaction) (Beat) That was a joke,I've got my own place so relax. Of coarse I have been known to raid the fridge of a friend once in a great while.

>
Jane: It's not bloody likely to be mine,....there's almost never anything in my fridge. I'm doing the starving artist thing. How else could I manage to keep my girlish figure.

>
Tim: Well with most women who have a figure like yours, I always seem to think that puking is involved to maintain it. Fortunately you don't appear to be like most women.

>
Jane: Well unlike those other women whom you were likely referring to, I actually cherish my food. Especially if it's something high in cholesterol, ...pizza come to mind now that I think about it. And if that thought popped into your head about a women's figure, how is it that you seemed to warm up to me just fine.

>
Tim: You crashed into my car, Jane. I had to make sure you weren't going to choke on said vomit, ...so I helped you out of your car and you clocked me for it. Besides, ..I wanted your insurance information so I could get my car fixed. You know how it is with guys and cars, ...some guys treat their car better than their own kids.

>
Jane : Sad,...but true. (Smiles) Wow, who knew that in order to find a decent guy I had to almost kill him with my car. Damn,and to think I spent my high school years looking for guys an grungy old clubs and deranged rival high schools.. What WAS I thinking, ...all I had to do was use a car as a battering ram and viola, ..I meet a guy. Thanks for convincing me to get to know you better.

>
Tim: Funny, ...I don't recall doing any convincing. You came to see ME, remember. After that you seemed to be convincing YOURSELF the whole way along.

>
Jane: (Sighs) Maybe.....

>
Tim: Yea, ...maybe. (Gives Jane a pat on the leg) Well, ...like it or not we should probably get going. It's getting late and your friend and family are probably wondering where you are by now.

>
Jane: (reluctantly) Do we HAVE to go back?

>
Tim: (looks at her with curiosity) Where would you prefer to go?

>
Jane: (looks him in the eyes) Anywhere,I just want some more time to think about the way things are going with my life, ..I graduated from art school today. I don't know I'd I told you about that or not. And anyway, ... being in your company seems to help the thought process along pretty well.

>
Tim: (amused) You're kidding.....(sighs) I suppose we could head SOMEWHERE. We can figure it out once we get into the air I suppose.

>
Jane: (Smiles) I don't care,but lets head someplace fun. I need fun.

>
Tim: Are you sure you've got the time?

>
Jane: I can make the time,after I call home I can call work as well to let them know that I won't be in. I'll fake a family emergency or something.

>
Tim: Damn, ...you'd think we'd known each other for years the way you're acting.

>
Jane: Was I acting? Damn, ...I can be a pretty convincing actor. Maybe I should go into the movie business or something.

>
Tim: I wouldn't worry about it too much, ...some giant corporate conglomerate has most likely stolen your life and made a fortune off of it already. You're better off just sticking to art, ...and speaking of which. Maybe you could show me some your stuff some time.

>
Jane: Why? You need your plane repainted or something?

>
Tim: (smirks) Hey, ...if you feel up to the task.

>
Jane: I'll keep it mind if I ever have painters block and need something else to do.

>
Tim: So noted, ...Alright then. You said you need fun, ...and I feel the need to get flying and we've got plenty of fuel. What do you say we get airborne and maybe we can satisfy both of those needs.

>
Jane: What have you got in mind?

>
Tim: I dunno, ...we'll fly along the coast for a bit and we'll see what comes to mind.

>
Jane: Sounds like a plan. (Jane and Tim get up and begin to work their way off the wings and down to the door on the side of the plane. Once inside they close the door, start the engines and after what seems like a long bumpy ride across the water, they proceed to get airborne)

>
(Inside the plane as it climbs to several thousand feet, ...once the plane levels out Tim begins to punch some numbers into the G.P.S. terminal on the consol)

>
Jane: And just what are you up to? Not instigating some sort of plan for world domination I hope.

>
Tim: Nah, ...I wouldn't want this world. Too many idiots for my taste, ..I'd go mad from trying to rule people who can't expand their minds beyond their own personal lives. Anyway, ...what I'm doing is accessing our position through the global positioning system. Sure, ...I could do it the old fashioned way but it would be more time consuming.

>
Jane: Ah the trait of laziness, ...I guess that's one more thing we have in common. And how did you know what I was going to ask?

>
Tim: Seemed like an obvious question I guess. Before G.P.S. people had no choice but to work it all out on paper,as such it's become a stereotype. Hence the reflex question, "why not the old way".

>
Jane: Damn, ...I never thought that I would ever ask a question that was predictable. The idea that people would be able to figure me out was always so repugnant.

>
Tim: I guess that would explain the lone wolf attitude you displayed when we first met.

>
Jane: First impressions are always the most crucial, ...I wanted to make sure you didn't know where I stood.

>
Tim: Funny, ...it seemed like you stood in the kitchen while we wrestled with each other.

>
Jane: Oh yea, ...before the make out session began. God, that was weird.

>
Tim: (as he banks the plane into a southerly heading) But fun,

....you have to admit it was probably the most interesting thing to happen in a good while.

>
Jane: No, ...I've had a few more interesting things happen before I met up with you. They're classified of coarse, ..which means I could tell you but then I'd have to kill you.

>
Tim: Oh, so you mean there IS something to look forward to in life. Thank god,and here I was afraid that I would just end up wasting mine.

>
Jane: (Laughs) So where are you taking us?

>
Tim: I've turned us south at the moment, we'll follow the coast until we decide on where to go.

>
Jane: (thinks deeply for a moment) Second star to the right, ...and straight on till morning?

>
Tim: (Peers out the windshield at the night sky and selects a star to follow and steers the plane to center the star with the crease in the windshield) That's kind of poetic,...where have I heard that before?

>
Jane: I think it was in some classic novel somewhere,but personally I heard it mentioned in Star Trek six.

>
Tim: (Does a double take) You're a trekki?

>
Jane: (scowls) Hell no,I only saw the one movie. And that was only because my idiot brother lost the remote to the Tv.

>
Tim: Um...you did know that you could manually change the channels, ...didn't you? I mean that was just a laziness thing right?

>
Jane: (rolls her eyes) Actually no, ...I couldn't change the channel manually. The buttons on the Tv had been broken since before I can remember. And I am NOT lazy,my brother reserves any and all rights to that. (Beat) At least he used to, ...before he hooked up with the scot. Then he actually turned responsible, ...it was like he morphed into a whole new person after that.

>
Tim: The "scot"?

>
Jane: It's a long story, .. We don't want you to nod off at the wheel now do we.

>
Tim: It would probably make for another cheap thrill.

>
Jane: Yea, ...but unfortunately it also includes the potential concept of death. I'd like to avoid that until I'm old enough to no longer be able to control my bowels and am therefor required to wear depends. Then you can talk about death all you want.

>
Tim: Do you actually think we'll know each other that long?

>
Jane: How the hell do I know, ...I was speaking hypothetically.

>
Tim: Ah yes, ...commonly referred to as talking out of your ass. Are you going to need a breath mint as long as your talking out of that particular orifice?

>
Jane: (scowls) Screw you....!

>
Tim: (laughs) No thanks, ...I don't know you well enough. A person's got to be careful these days you know. (Jane tries to resist but eventually begins to laugh lightly)

>
Jane: Any chance you might let me fly this thing again as long as we're up here?

>
Tim: I thought you didn't want to talk about the concept of death any more. (Jane rolls her eyes and flips him off at the same time)

>
(Fade to the next morning. The plane has long since landed on the water and taxied it's way into a nearby harbor where Tim moored it at a pier amongst other amphibious aircraft. Jane is seen sleeping

in her seat as she leans up against the airframe. A small wave rolls underneath the boat causing it to rock slightly. As this happens Jane opens her eyes slowly and looks about the plane to notice that Tim is no longer in the pilot seat but is instead sleeping on the floor towards the back of the aircraft. Jane stares at him for a long moment, smiles and opts not to wake him. But instead turns on the G.P.S. terminal on the instrument consol and begins to try to figure out just where in the world they are. After several failed attempts Jane finally get's the thing to perform some sort of diagnostic function which in the process locates itself on the globe. Jane then manages to get the thing to display co-ordinates along with the name of the nearest town.)

>
Jane: Key West...? We flew all the way down to the Florida Keys? (Jane stops to reflect back on the previous night and recalls Tim asking her several times if she wanted to go back or to keep flying south.) Well, ...I did always want to go here. It's a shame we couldn't have landed somewhere closer to Disney world. I swore to Daria that I would someday get a picture of me giving Mickey Mouse a wedgie. (Jane looks out one of the side windows to see that at the end of the dock is a series of payphones. She then rummages through her pockets for a phone card that still had time on it. The after finding one she opens the airplane door and heads down the dock to the payphone. After dialing Jane is distraught to find that she has gotten Daria's answering machine)

>
Daria's machine: Hey, ...I'm not home right now and if you're going to continue to call me like this then I may chose never to be home. Either way, just leave a message and If I deem you worthy I may actually call you back. Or I'll just sick the police on you for harassment. Take it easy. (Beep)

>
Jane: Hey Daria,It's Jane. Listen, ...I'm sorry for not calling within the last day or so but a lot of things have been happening. Right now I'm in the Florida Keys with Tim, ...we flew down here on a whim last night. I've got the weirdest feeling about this guy,....so weird it's good. ...I can't explain it better over the machine. I'll call you later on. (The machine beeps signaling the end of the message and Jane hangs up the phone. As she is walking back to the plane she spots several cans of various paints as well as brushes and a roller that was being used to paint an advertisement on the wall of a nearby building. After thinking for a moment Jane smiles evilly and moves to grab the paints and brushes and takes them back to the plane)

>
(Cut to sometime around midday, ...Tim stirs from his sleep finally and proceeds to get up and walk about the plane. He immediately notices that the aircraft door is open and he moves to investigate. As he approaches the door he notices the faint but distinguishable aroma of paint fumes emanating from somewhere outside the aircraft. Tim steps outside the door and to his surprise, there is Jane leaning against the aircraft painting something alongside the nose of the plane.)

>
Tim:What the hell? (Steps closer) Jane what are you doing?

>
Jane: What does it look like I'm doing, ...I'm painting your plane for you. (Tim is about to reply but is cut off by Jane) Hey now, ...don't get all irritated on me. You yourself invited me to paint your plane sometime and I told you I'd keep it in mind. Well, I did. And now I've accepted, ...I'm just not doing the whole plane. I'm more or less using the plane as a medium for self expression.

>
Tim: (Comes even closer to examen what Jane has painted. He then takes several steps back to get a wider perspective. The painting is

a sort of mural, ..specifically it is a painting of Jane herself in a white one piece bathing suite, she is turned away with only her head turned to face the onlookers. Underneath is the partially completed title of "Jane's Folly") Um.....

>
Jane: What do you think? I'm almost done with it.

>
Tim: (Stares for a moment and then looks Jane over) It's a good likeness, ...but what possessed you to do this,AND name my plane for me?

>
Jane: It's a tradition that goes all the way back to world war two, ...guys used to paint pictures of the girls they liked on the side of their planes and then name it after that girl. The way I figure, ...if the plane isn't named then it had no personality of it's own.

>
Tim: (sighs and then smirks) Am I that obvious?

>
Jane: What, that you like me? Well I did sort of pick up this vibe you were sending out for a while.

>
Tim: Damn, ...I knew I should have had my biological frequency coded. I'll have to talk to the IT guys at work about that one. I don't suppose the feeling could potentially be mutual?

>
Jane: (Leans forward, kisses him and then swatches his nose with the paint brush covering it with red paint) Clean yourself up, ...and if you want we'll find some place to have breakfast. (Tim smirks and grabs a nearby rag to wipe his nose with)

>
Jane: And get this, ...if you take step or so back you can see one of those cool hidden pictures. Check it out, ...go on.

>
Tim: (takes a step back and does notice a few extra features but no hidden picture) Jane what the hell are you talking about?

>
Jane: You must not be far enough away, ...take another step back. (Tim Does so and having reached the edge of the dock unknowingly, he loses his balance and falls over the edge into the water. As soon as Tim comes back to the surface Jane starts laughing) I TOLD you I'd get you back. (Tim reaches out for Jane to help him out of the water) Oh no, ...we're even and it's going to stay that way.

>
Tim: (Manages to pull himself partially up onto the pier and then quickly grabs Jane's leg and pulls her into the crystal clear water with him) NOW we're even!

>
(Cut to Daria's apartment that same day. Duncan comes out of the kitchen wearing the same clothes as he had the day before. As he walks past the answering machine he notices the red light blinking indicating that a new message had been recorded. He presses play and to his surprise Jane's voice is heard over the speaker)

>
Duncan: (Calls towards Daria's bedroom) Hey Daria, ...you can stop worrying about your friend. She's hiding out in the florida keys! (Daria can be heard as she stumbles out of her bed and trips over whatever happens to be cluttering her floor)

>
Daria: Damned room is turning into a death trap. (Puts her glasses on and her vision comes into focus as she gazes at Duncan) What the hell are YOU still doing here?

>
Duncan: (Laughs) It's nice to see you too, love. I never left last night, ...I just crashed on the couch after you went to go kick your shoes off in your room. After you didn't come back I figured that you just didn't make it past the bed and conked on out.

>
Daria: Mmph....the call of the pillow must have been just too overwhelming. I laid back on the bed for minute and I don't even remember closing my eyes.

>
Duncan: Yea, ...I've heard that can happen to some people.

>
Daria: So it can apparently. So what's this I hear about Jane hiding out in the keys?

>
Duncan: That's about what I said, she must have called this morning. She left a message saying she'd call you back later. I told you she'd be alright, ...and by the message it sounds like she is in fact having a good time with that guy of hers.

>
Daria: (rolls her eyes) Oh all right, ...you were the one who was right this time. Do you want a doggie treat as a reward or something?

>
Duncan: "It's BACON!" (Pretends to pant like a dog)

>
Daria: Well at least you didn't pretend to be "Snoopy", ...Old Charles Schultz would probably roll over in his grave over that one.

>
Duncan: Or rise from it, ..you never can tell with people these days. Artists can be awfully crabby if their work is trod upon. (Sighs) SO.....now that you know that your friend is safe and sound perhaps we could continue with our regularly scheduled lives.

>
Daria: Do we REALLY have to go back to our previous programming? We should probably cancel that old show and start a new one of our own.

>
Duncan: We're not cutting sex out of the picture are we? Not to sound like a sexist pig or anything. But between us, ...I think at least once a year is critical to the relationship.

>
Daria: (scowls) Are you saying you'd start eyeing up other women?

>
Duncan: Hell no,but I'd hate to have to resort to the knuckle shuffle. PLEASE don't let that happen, lass.

>
Daria: (Smiles and then sighs) No,I wasn't about to resort to that. I have needs as well you know. What I was getting at is,and please don't mistake this for conformity, but everybody is getting involved on a deeper level. Trent and Maria to be the prime example. But now the unthinkable is happening. My friend, ...Jane "the lone wolf artist" Lane has found this guy out of the blue. Things just CAN'T be the same anymore. And WE can't just be the same anymore, ...my friendship with Jane has changed by leaps and bounds over the years. My relationship with YOU has changed over the years, ...I'm just not sure where everything is going to go from here.

>
Duncan: You're not going to propose to ME are you? I think it might take me a while to get used to that.

>
Daria: Not likely thank you very much, ...I am DEFINITELY not ready for a step that big. Sex I can handle,hell you moving in with me I could handle. But not marriage,not right now.

>
Duncan: (Wipes his brow) Thank god, ...I thought I was in a deep pile for a second there.

>
Daria: Don't be so dramatic,life with each other when we're ready wouldn't be so bad. Just don't ask for kids, ...I didn't even like kids when I was a kid.

>
Duncan: So.....everybody is changing. What should we do about it?

>
Daria: The only thing I can think of is to make sure that everybody stays in touch,no matter what. Will you promise to help me to do that?

>
Duncan: Aye lass,that and more. (Daria steps forward and kisses him)

>
Duncan: (shrugs) Fair enough.... (Beat) I'll give Trent a buzz later and let him know what's up with Jane.
>
(Fade to black, the scene comes back up in the same room of Daria's apartment four days later, ...the phone is ringing and in the blurred distance Daria can be seen walking towards the phone. As she comes closer she comes into focus and upon reaching the phone on the wall she picks up before the answering machine does)
>
Daria: Hello?
>
Jane: Hey Daria, ...what's new?
>
Daria: Hey Jane, ...jeez I'd thought you'd dropped off the planet there for a while. Where are you and what have you been up to?

>
Jane: I'm still down at key west. God Daria, ...I'm having the best week of my life. I managed to do some spectacular portraits of some of the people around town down here.
>
Daria: (Faux enthusiasm) Um.. great,I'm happy for you. So when are you coming home, ..we miss you up here.
>
Jane: Aw Daria, ...are you getting all soft on me? The next thing you know you'll actually be giving a shit about people. (Sighs) I swear, ...what ARE we going to do with you amiga?
>
Daria: Well, whatever you do. Just make sure that the last thing includes burying me upside down for reasons I won't disclose at this time.
>
Jane: Gotcha, ...one burial sunny side up.
>
Daria: Well, now that the formalities have been taken care of. What have you, Jane Coyote Lane, been up to all week besides paining tired old people in the Carribean? And be reminded, ..you have no lifelines, ...you're already phoning a friend, ...and there's no such thing as a fifty- fifty. Unless you count a test where you guessed half the answers. Oh...and this IS your final answer, ..so make it a good one.
>
Jane: (long pause) I got married, Daria. (The sound of a bodily mass falling to the floor is heard over the phone followed by silence) Daria.....?
>
The End.....
>
Footnotes :
>
1.) Reference to a previous fic in this series where Maria informed Trent that she was being considered for an experimental operation on the retina that could potentially give her SOME sight.

>

>Feed back is always appreciated, ...I may be reached at wildgoose81@hotmail.com

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13. For Just a Moment

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV and Viacom productions.
>
Note: This story is the next in the Unseen Phenomenon Series,it takes place eight months after "Which Ever Way the Wind Blows".
>

> For Just a Moment
 By
> Wildgoose

>

> An engagement had come and gone,months had lapsed into a short number of years,and finally after long and grueling preparations the moment long awaited had finally come. It started out in such a hustle,rushing to the hair dresser and then back home to fit into a dress. It was so hectic,especially since every time she turned around a photographer shoved a camera into her face. I can only imagine what that must have looked like to Maria,she'd only had those retinal implants for about a month and even then they only gave her the visual acuity of shapes and shadows. From what she'd described when she first took her first look around ever, everyone looked like some sort of silhouette to her and as such looked all the same. Sunlight was overwhelming to her so she still had to wear a lighter version of her old dark glasses,but for the sake of having the perfect moment she took them off for the ceremony. And if sunlight was overwhelming then those camera flashes must have been pure hell for her.
 We all, and by all I mean the entire bridal party. Let everybody else get their own damned ride, ...the limo's mine. Anyway, ...we all piled into the limo and made way for the church. Maria's mother was using tissues by the box the whole way over, ...hell she'd started from the moment the gown was pulled out of the plastic cover and hadn't stopped since. For a while there I thought there was the possibility that we'd all drown in the limousine en route to the church. My god, ...what a glorious headline that would have made for the next mornings paper. But never the less the bridal party made it in one piece and CPR turned out to be unnecessary after all.

> The ceremony itself was nothing short of interesting,Maria still needing assistance to find her way so she had her father escorting her by one arm and Cheyenne by the other. That dogs been everywhere and back with that girl, ...it came as no surprise that she wanted her canine companion to participate no matter how much everyone objected. Trent didn't seem to mind though,in fact he welcomed it. Whatever made the day the most special for her than that was what that boy was going to do, and so it should be. The rest of the ceremony was a blur as far as I could tell,I was a bridesmaid for the second time in my life and I still didn't catch the bouquet. Not that I really tried for that matter,in fact I distinctly recall ducking to avoid another woman who had mistaken the toss of the bridal bouquet as a game of tackle football. I found myself waiting to see if this person was going to spike the flowers when, as I could tell it was meant to be, she finally succeeded in capturing the bouquet after bowling over Jane. She didn't spike them however, much to my disappointment but then that's life I guess. What did worry me was the fact that when Trent tossed the garter, in the complete opposite direction of all of the eligible bachelors I might add. I presumed this to be an accident worthy of Trent's notable stature in life,it somehow found it's way to me and landed very neatly on my head. Duncan got a roaring laugh out of this but however funny he deemed it to be,I've determined it to mean that I'm destined to end up with another woman. So I've decided to hole up in my apartment after the reception for the rest of my life,Duncan will just have to bring me everything that I need.
 Maria was surprisingly a good dancer,sure she was limited to only the slow dances but she didn't step on Trent's feet once. I on the other hand was exactly the opposite,I think Duncan will need one of his feet amputated after tonight. But I improved none the less,he taught me as we went and I actually was able to work my way up to one of the slightly more advanced dances,still stepping on his feet every now and again of coarse. But after a while I think he actually began to enjoy the dull ache of my dress shoes digging into his. I

could tell by the way he would grit his teeth slightly when it happened.

> The night really did seem so memorable as opposed to any of the other weddings that I've either taken part in or just simply attended against my will. There was an almost mystical quality to the air,and to my utter amazement I really did enjoy myself. The band seemed top shelf, ...a rare quality indeed as they indulged all of my requests at their earliest convenience and with the upmost courtesy despite a little sarcasm I may have dished their way at first. It may not have been my moment in the spotlight but there were times that night when I wished time itself could just stand still, specifically when Duncan and I were dancing and it had been a good long time since I had stepped on his feet last. Especially so when during the last dance Duncan whispered into my ear that someday soon he would give me all this and more if it was what I wanted, ...I knew that this was an indirect proposal and I also knew that the someday soon part really meant that there was some stuff he wanted to do with his life before settling down, ...I could live with that. But what also occurred to me was that he'd had a little bit to drink tonight and his libido might have been the one doing the talking in order to gain access to my underwear. What a shame,if we didn't have to travel to our room for the night up on the third floor it might have worked. But I knew by the time we got up there I would have regained my senses so I dismissed the thought and continued dancing with him.
 Maria and Trent looked so happy as the night came to a close and they wished everyone well as the guests left in varying levels of intoxication. Cheyenne was busy sniffing all of the gifts and giving away their contents with a different sounding bark for specific items,a low grunt for money, I caught onto that one real quick. I'll have to have that dog at my wedding someday,that way I can just throw out all the rest of the junk without even opening it and just keep the money. Speaking of money, Jane and Tim gave them the biggest gift of all I found out later. It seems that Tim was extremely well off due to an inheritance, unbeknownst to Jane until seven months into their marriage. Anyway,they gave the newlyweds a five year CD worth one million dollars. "Emergency money,not to be touched otherwise" as Tim so eloquently put it.

>Damn,I hope they're just as generous to me when my day comes. But getting back to wherever it was that I left off,it seemed that if for just one magical moment in time. They WERE the perfect couple.
 Daria dated the entry, closed her diary, ...and shoved it into her overnight bag before turning out the lights and climbing into bed with Duncan. She paused for a moment to look out their hotel window on the third floor,it had started to snow.

>
The End.....

>
Comments are always welcome, ...I may be reached at wildgoose81@hotmail.com

14. The Things We Put Ourselves Through

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV and Viacom productions.

>
Note: This story is the next in the Unseen Phenomenon Series. It takes place seven months after "For Just a Moment"

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>
 The Things We Put Ourselves Through

> By
 Wildgoose

>

>

> (Daria stood still as an instructor examined Daria's equipment to ensure that everything was secured properly and unobstructed by anything that would prevent proper deployment. He commented that Daria had done an excellent job at getting geared up and wished her well on her days activity. As the instructor walked away to check on another student Daria turned to look at Duncan who was already geared up and ready to go.)

>Daria: For the sake of my own sanity,explain to me why I'm doing this again?

>Duncan: If I remember what you'd stated earlier in the week correctly,you wanted to be a supportive future fiancée by joining me in the things that I wished to do before eventually settling down. (Duncan smiles as Daria wears an expression that clearly states that she wishes she could kick herself for saying that) You can back out if you wish lass,I've done this before. And I won't think any less of you if you're scared.

>Daria: (scowls) Wait,you've done this before? I thought you wanted to do something adventurous before settling down,you know. That you've NEVER done before. And as long as we're on the subject, ...WHEN have you done this before?

>Duncan: Fire school,they hold a refresher course over in the next state every year for fire jumpers.

>Daria: Say what?

>Duncan: Fire jumpers,they're normally part of the forestry service. They parachute in behind out of control forest fires to construct fire breaks or to set containment fires. I've been going every year voluntarily in case the department was ever needed to help out in such an emergency.

>Daria: Then what the HELL did you feel the need to do THIS for?

>Duncan: This way is different, ...we actually get to pull the cord ourselves and maybe do some crazy stuff before hand. The way I was trained to do it we hooked a tether attached to the chute to a cable so when we jumped the chute deployed automatically so you wouldn't have to let go of your equipment. It also guaranteed that the chute would deploy. Whereas this way it's all up to you,so it DOES add a little adventure. (Looks Daria up and down as he can tell she's actually a little scared now) Are you sure you still want to do this?

>Daria: (swallows some air trying to hide her fear) I told you I would didn't I?

>Duncan: Aye,you did. But I still won't hold that against you if you want to back out.

>Daria: (nervously) Um.....no,I should probably do something adventurous myself for once in my life. Like you once said,to be able to say later that I actually did something.

>Duncan: (shrugs and looks over at the rest of the class who have already started to board the airplane) I guess we should head on over then,don't worry. It's a lot more fun that you think,provided you remember the correct way to land that is.

>Daria: (frowns and looks down at her feet for a moment in uncertainty) Right,don't want any broken bones now do we.

>Duncan: Actually,I was thinking more along the lines of avoiding objects on the ground like,cars, cattle, other people. You know, things that will squash at the same time that you do.

>Daria: (Glares at Duncan as they walk towards the plane) Be careful,

....or I may just try to land on YOU.

>Duncan: Aye,that could stand to be a tad painful. I'll keep it in mind then.

>(Cut to the plane once it's airborne)

>(Daria sits on a bench next to Duncan while chewing the living hell out of her nails,she is clearly scared as she stares towards the hatch near the rear back side of the aircraft. There is no door,just an open hatch with heavy gusts of wind blowing into the aircraft through it.)

>Duncan: (looks over to see Daria chewing her nails and decides to strike up a conversation with her to get her mind off things) What are you staring at, love?

>Daria: I keep waiting to see the wicked witch of the west flying past the door on her broomstick while that annoying Wizard of Oz theme plays in the background.

>Duncan: (smiles) I doubt you'd hear it with all this wind. (Beat) So tell me,why are you REALLY doing this? And don't feed me the crap you fed me before,I know you too well for it to wash.

>Daria: (takes a deep breath) I'll tell you if I make it to the ground in one piece one way or the other,okay? (The instructor gets up after listening to his radio for a minute and announces that it's time to jump. Daria upon hearing this makes sure that her glasses are secured beneath her goggles and then wearily gets up behind the people in front of her and attempts to force herself to walk forward with the line as her heart begins to pound harder and faster with each step she takes) I'm scared, Duncan.

>Duncan: Think of it this way,compared to this.... childbirth someday will be a walk in the park. And if you could manage THAT then life's a piece of cake,the rest will just seem a whole lot easier.

>Daria: But I don't WANT children.

>Duncan: (Scowls for a moment and then lightens up) Ok, ...sorry. It was just an example.

>Daria: (As she reaches the door and stares out at the clouds moving along side her and then down at the ground a few thousand feet below, Daria freezes in fear. Her heart can be heard in her ears now like a tremendous kettle drum beating almost faster then she could distinguish. Her hands felt clammy within her rented neoprene gloves and she could tell that she was probably sweating profusely everywhere else too. After several moments Daria finally manages to get her jaw to move enough to squeeze out a few words.) Duncan,I don't think I can do this,I can't move! I've come to the realization that this is in fact a very BAD idea and I think it would be in the best interest of both of us if I did back out after all. (Long pause) Don't you think....?

>Duncan: (studies her for the longest time and then takes a deep sigh before shouting over the wind) I understand, love. I was the same way my first time,and you know what?

>Daria: What.....?

>Duncan: (smiles evilly) My team shoved me out the door anyway,I'll see you on the ground. (He grabs Daria's shoulder firmly and shoves her out the door screaming as she went)

>Duncan: (looks at the person behind him and smiles again) She's really gonna kick my arse for this later. (he then jumps out the door after Daria)

>(Cut to Daria still plunging through the lower atmosphere, ...still screaming)

>Daria: (stops screaming long enough to try and hear herself think

over the wind screaming in her ears. Her skin feels like it's being drawn tight as if almost to the tearing point.) Okay there's the ground and it looks hard as hell. Think,think.....think,okay count to five and pull. One one thousand,two one thousand.....three,ah the hell with it I've seen what happens in cartoons when the character gets to five. (Daria grasps at her left shoulder a few times and finally locates the rip cord and yanks it as hard as she can. To her amazement the chute deploys as it should and her decent slows dramatically. Daria who is now staring at everything around her in wonder has completely forgotten how fast her heart had been pounding against her chest as if it itself wanted freedom from her body. The wind still whistled past her ears most likely drowning out the sound of her still beating heart,but that didn't matter now. Daria suddenly felt a small degree of confidence welling up within her telling her that things would be okay,she wasn't going to be turned into human pudding when she reached the ground after all. That is until her heart jumped once more as Duncan raced past her at lightning speed in a vertical dive,Daria screamed once more as she thought Duncan's chute had failed and that he was now destined to die as the aforementioned human pudding against the ground. Duncan did a few acrobatics that would have been hair raising had Daria actually been able to feel her hair being whipped in the wind above her head. And then to Daria's relief Duncan leveled off and deployed his chute and drifted off to her left so as not to get entangled should Daria somehow catch up to him. After a long while passed the ground finally caught them and Daria upon landing ended up tumbling end over end along the ground causing her to get lost within her own parachute)

>Daria: (as she stumbled about in the chute) The door ,where's the damned door to this thing!!! (Duncan, who had landed seconds before Daria did unhooked his chute from his pack and walked over to help Daria with hers. Upon her exit, as she was about to let Duncan have it for shoving her, Daria spied non other than Jane and Timothy Ravens sitting in their Jeep. They had just arrived on the scene as can be told by the field of dust they left after crossing the field at a high rate of speed. They clapped as Daria spied them if only to inform Daria that she couldn't embellish the facts or hide them as they knew Daria would be prone to do the latter if no one was around to see her do something that she felt now was so incredibly stupid.)

>Jane: (who has since gotten out of the jeep and is now walking up to Daria and Duncan) If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I'd have never believed it. That had to have taken some SERIOUS balls, Daria. I am DAMNED proud of you! (Daria looks at Jane slightly dazed from her experience and tries to deny that this was of her own doing but Duncan cut her off)

>Duncan: Aye,tough as nails this girl is to be able to choke back her own worst fears and stare death in his butt ugly face.

>Daria: (looks down at her boots as she mumbles) No, ...we've met. He's actually pretty handsome. (1)

>Duncan: What was that, love?

>Daria: Nothing,just trying to convince my heart to stop pounding.

>Jane: Well as long as you're talking to your heart then inform it that we're about to send a massive amount of cholesterol it's way,because a feat like this demands it's just reward. PIZZA!!! (Daria sighs reluctantly and decides to just shut up and follow Jane to the jeep)

>(Cut to that night at Daria's apartment. Duncan is over as he can be

seen helping Daria to prepare dinner)

>Daria: (decides not to hold back any longer about the days events)
Why didn't you tell them the whole story, ..Duncan? Why didn't you tell them that I was frozen stiff and that I wanted to back out at that last second? Now they think that I've shed my proverbial shell that I've spent the entirety of my life in and am now some sort of daredevil. And why the hell DID you tell them to come?

>Duncan: They don't think that lass,I asked them to come and watch so that they could see you do something monumental in your life. Something no one would have ever expected you to do,and you did. With a little push,pardon the pun,you overcame one of your fears.

>Daria: But this was supposed to for YOU,I was just doing this to be supportive. No matter HOW stupid and dangerous it was. (Duncan walks over to her and wraps his arms about her waist)

>Duncan: You mean you really were doing all of that just for ME?

>Daria: (smirks) Maybe,that's the problem with love. It makes you want to do stupid things for a guy. (Duncan kisses her neck) But don't ever expect me to do that again,I'm pretty sure that I soaked my jumpsuit on the way down.

>Duncan: Ah,so THAT'S why they refused to give you back your deposit. And here I was all set to beat the shit out of the bastards for you.

>Daria: Yea,fear makes you do strange things too. That's the REAL reason they put those chemical toilets on airplanes,underwear is only designed to hold so much. (Duncan bursts out laughing)

>Duncan: So are you going to let Jane continue to believe that you jumped out on your own?

>Daria: I'll have to,I'm not about to give her the satisfaction of generating the lifelong mental image of me being shoved headfirst out of an airplane for her own personal amusement. (Sighs) So what OTHER terrors do you have in store for me?

>Duncan: I'm not sure yet,but we'll go through them together. And I promise that there won't be anything else like what we did today.

>Daria: (smiles) That's a relief.

>Duncan: There's still one thing that bothers me though,you don't have a ring.

>Daria: That's okay,I never actually accepted. You just gave me an indirect proposal and I never replied to it.

>Duncan: Aye,I remember. What a shame,a long engagement would give us plenty of time to think things through.

>Daria: Maybe,but until I see some gold on my finger I'm going to assume that you're still too interested in being able to say that you've done stuff to be serious about a life with me just yet.

>Duncan: (looks slightly depressed over Daria's words) Aye,I guess you're right. (Beat) Well,I guess we should get on with dinner. Can you go to the hall closet and see if we have any more of that powdery cheese stuff?

>Daria: (raises an eyebrow) You mean grated Parmesan?

>Duncan: Aye,that's the stuff. I'll keep an eye on the stove so the food doesn't burn.

>Daria: (smirks) You would take the easy job. (Daria turns and leaves the kitchen on her way down the hall to the closet, when she gets there she opens the door and begins to look for the cheese only to notice a tiny parachute floating down in front of her having been

knocked free by the opening of the closet door. Daria grabs it before it reaches the floor and notices that at the end of a string attached to the chute is a diamond solitaire and a note that says only one thing. "I always keep my promises" (2)

>The End.....

>Comments are always welcome, ...I may be reached at
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>Footnotes :

>1) A reference to "A New Experience", Daria encountered Paul (AKA the angel of death) after being hit by a car and rendered unconscious. He is described in that story as being a six foot tall male Caucasian with long brown hair tied back into a ponytail, and wearing a matching khaki shirt and pants contrasted by a floor length black duster and same color boots.

>2) A reference to "For Just A Moment", At Trent and Maria's wedding reception while Daria and Duncan were dancing, Duncan looked around at everyone enjoying themselves and promised Daria that someday he would give her all of this and more if that's what she wanted.

>

15. Generations

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV and Viacom productions.

>
Note: This story is the next in the "Unseen Phenomenon Series" and takes place between "The Things We Put Ourselves Through" and "The Empty Hourglass"

>

> Generations
 By

> Wildgoose

>

> The day had started off so smoothly,Daria had managed to work her way out of bed as she always had over the past nine months. Each day becoming more and more labored as her abdomen swelled to what Daria had begun to refer to as "the addition on the house". The extra weight she carried caused a variety of aches and pains,visits to the doctor, and a change of wardrobe. However despite all this, Duncan marveled how well she bore it all. Right up until the moment the rate at which life happened accelerated to near warp speed, at least from Daria and Duncan's perspective. It was realized that the time had come and Duncan, in true fatherly form went berserk. Upon being "informed" he promptly grabbed the suitcase that had been prepared ahead of time just in case this happened early and dashed out to the car with suitcase in hand to leave for the hospital. Halfway down the road Duncan realized that he had forgotten something very important, ...his labored wife. Stomping on the brakes, Duncan spun the car around, in the very middle of traffic causing a fender bender or two in the process, and headed back to pick up Daria. After she had lumbered into the car, Duncan once again took off, driving like a maniac the whole way all the while Daria is beating him up from the passenger seat for doing so.
 It was as if the three stooges were the nurses upon arrival at the hospital, they all seemed to appear with the utmost urgency eager to take care of whatever emergency was presented to them while getting in each others way the whole time. They checked Daria's vitals, wrapped a pretty little tag around her wrist, performed a few other necessary odds and ends, right before they shoved her into the maternity ward and left her there as if forgotten about. Duncan was livid that the doctor was not

yet there, citing all the different things that could go wrong without the doctors presence and citing also that he would get Helen to sue SOMEBODY the second they got out of the hospital. Daria meanwhile, having recovered from her ride in car and from her attention given by the female counterparts to Larry, Moe, and Curly, was lying on her back on the Gurney counting the cracks in the ceiling between contractions. And once THEY would hit Daria would reach over for Duncan's arm and rip off a few hairs just so he could share in some of the pain. There was no way in hell Daria was going to go through this much pain without at least getting to watch somebody ELSE go through some as well. After about thirty minutes of sitting there and ripping off Duncan's arm hair a few at a time, once the arm was bald she'd thought about working on his groin if he would just move close enough, Jane arrived and was allowed to be in the delivery room during the birth. She'd brought a few items with her, knowing full well that neither Daria nor Duncan had called anyone else yet for fear that the soon to be grandparents would attempt to take over, to take full advantage of the opportunity to distract her friend from her painful endeavor.

> Labor seemed to take forever, ...the doctor arrived and after staring at Daria's cervix for what Daria swore was an hour, she even asked if he was going to take a picture, he put Daria's legs up in the stirrups, sat there like Johnny Binch and waited until both arrivals practically fell into his lap. At the very worst of the delivery, Jane decided that it was her time to make the experience as memorable as possible. While Daria was cursing Duncan's very name and sweating fit to melt onto the sheets, Jane pulled out a small vial of holy water she'd obtained from a church on the way to the hospital, and a bible which she opened to whatever page the book opened to for the sake of effect, and began to perform an exorcism on Daria. Spraying Daria with the holy water once or twice, Jane proceeded with the exorcism. All the while drawing laughter from the doctor and the nurse because Daria was unintentionally playing the perfect part.

 Upon the birth of each child after which Duncan would jump for joy, literally in fact, and then proceed to snap five thousand or so pictures. Being already exhausted from giving birth and grumpy as all hell from the pain, Daria allowed Duncan to take one final picture after the birth of the second child and then smashed the camera. She then asked to hold her children, smiled at them as they cooed and fell asleep in her arms, and then decided that they had stumbled onto an excellent idea. "So smart for newborns" she said as she handed them back to her husband. After which Daria fell promptly asleep as if somebody had just shut off the power to her body.

> Helen and Jake, along with Duncan's parents Kyrsten and Michael, arrived that evening having eventually been told once Daria had regained some of her strength. Duncan and Jane had thought that to be best for Daria since the parental units were certain to throw a fit for having missed the delivery. And they did,for a GREAT length of time, at which point Daria told them all that is they didn't shut the F*** up and get the F*** out of her F***ing face, she was still in a good deal of discomfort, that they would not be permitted to see the children at ALL. The previous portion of this statement went completely over the parents heads,they'd only heard the word "children" indicating more than one, which Daria had not told them about at any time during the pregnancy. There was a long awkward moment of silence which Daria misinterpreted as their understanding of her resolve, followed by the parents doing the hundred yard dash from Daria's room back down to maternity to look at the babies sleeping in their cribs.
 Having watched the entire days events unfold from the very beginning, to the mad dash in the car, to Jane's

acts of humor being caught on film during the delivery, to the ranting of the now "grandparents", Quinn now watched the newborns from the most choice spot in the hospital. She was standing right next to the cribs, having the advantage of not being seen, while all of the others had to watch and make faces through the window from outside the room. The grandparents looked so stupid as they waved and pressed their noses against the glass, Quinn wished she could take a picture to give to Daria. She'd love nothing better then to torture Helen and Jake with their childlike behavior caught on film. Quinn turned to look back at the infants, they were so small Quinn thought, so fragile.....they were living miracles. And although she had not actually "lived" per say to see Daria's moment, Quinn still felt privileged to be there. "I'll always be watching you" Quinn confessed, "I'll be there to watch every step that your parents see you make,....and I'll be there to see every one that they don't. That's my job,and not just as your aunt."

> A nurse walking towards the cribs with tags in hand passed unknowingly through Quinn and placed them on the cribs before her, It was official now. Daria and Duncan had named their fraternal children. The child to the left of Quinn, being a boy, was granted by his parents the name Nicodemus. The child to the right, being of the female persuasion, was granted the name Ariel.
As Quinn watched unseen by anyone, ...Daria and Duncan came down to join everyone else in the staring contest. Still very exhausted from the delivery as early as half a day ago, Daria slowly leaned forward in her wheelchair to press her face against the cool glass and then reeled backward as she was blinded by the flash of Jake's camera reflecting off the glass into Daria's eyes. "Sorry kiddo" he exclaimed with a smile as he took another picture of the grandchildren without the hindrance of the flash this time. Jane, at the same time as Jake, took a Polaroid of her own and handed the picture to Daria as a keepsake . "Would you like to hold them" said the nurse who had wheeled Daria down from her room. "Yes,but not right now" Daria said with a sigh, "I'm so tired I'm afraid I'll drop them." Daria subtly directs the nurses attention to the grandparents, "And I'm afraid that if I let THEM hold the kids I'll either get back damaged goods or I won't get them back at all." The nurse tried not to laugh as she informed everyone that she was going to take Daria upstairs to get some rest. They all nodded as if what was said was nothing of importance and continued to watch through the glass. While being wheeled towards the elevator, Daria looked down at the Polaroid Jane had taken of the newborns, between the two cribs was a small white spot that one would normally say had been caused by a flash reflecting off the glass. Except that Jane hadn't used one. "I had a feeling you'd drop by" Daria thought to herself, "all I ask Quinn, is that you make yourself useful and keep an eye on them for me." Upon concluding her thoughts the elevator door made a bell like sound and swung it's doors wide, and then closed them obscuring her from view and concluding for her a day that had started a new generation.

>
The End.....

>
Comments and suggestions are always appreciated, ...I may be contacted at wildgoose81@hotmail.com

16. A Change of Pace

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV and Viacom productions.

>
Note: This story is the next in the "Unseen Phenomenon Series"

and takes place two weeks after "Generations".

>
 Change of Pace

> By
 Wildgoose

>
 (The scene is black with the exception of the irritating green glow of the digital alarm clock that sits poised to ring at a moments notice on top of the night stand on the right side of the bed. The bright LED numbers on the clock have just changed to display the most current time which happens to be 2:03 in the morning. Snoring is heard in the background emanating not from a single person but from two people simultaneously, almost as if they were in contest to see who could drown the other out first. The volume of the snoring was a definite indicator of extreme fatigue, it was at times nasal and screamed of dry throat. But all of this was to come to an end,without warning a wail pierced the darkness. And a few seconds later a second wail of a slightly different tone slammed into the eardrums of the slumbering individuals causing them to create their own batch of noises. A couple of grunts and a pair of groans and one of them had at least managed to work open a single bloodshot eye. A minute later the same person brought forth the second eye into the darkness, equally as bloodshot and blurry as the other without the aid of a pair of glasses. Despite the darkness, what needs to be done is clear,the fate of sanity itself may very well depend on it. It's time to get the significant other to fall out of bed and tend to the hungry infants this time around.

> Daria groggily reached over in the darkness and shook the warm sleeping body of her husband. He, being tired himself from a very late day at work, had the covers pulled far over his head to insure not only comfort and warmth but silence as well. The shaking had no effect as Duncan continued to snore, Daria shook him again with still no effect. She then decided that a snap of cool air would wake him out of his hiatus in dreamland, Daria whipped the covers off of his body hoping to wake him into consciousness but instead got a loud report caused by the rapid escape of body gas from Duncan's lower half. Daria grimaced in disgust as she quickly covered him back up to contain the stench and then decided that enough was enough. She gave Duncan a swift smack on the head and as he grunted to indicate that he was now semi conscious, Daria informed him of the gruesome tasks ahead of him. Duncan resisted with the inquiry as to who's turn it really was, Daria scowled at him in the darkness as she informed him that she had been tending to the newborns all day and that it was now his turn to tend them. Upon his less than positive response Daria demonstrated her resolve to him by finding her way in the dark to the bathroom, filled a small bucket that had once been used to capture morning sickness midstream with ice cold water from the tub spigot, carried it back to the bed and shook it over Duncan's head as a warning that if he didn't get up immediately then he was going to wear the bucket and it's contents.
 Duncan's attitude became much more favorable to Daria from that moment on and through the course of the night which happened to include another two wake up calls, one having been for a feeding and the other to change the nastiest soiled diapers you'd ever smelled. Duncan swore at one point to Daria that the infants seemed to defecate in unison regardless of whom had eaten what and when.)

>
 (The scene cuts to late the next morning, Daria is busy sitting on the couch. She has parked within close reach a blue stroller with a baby boy resting comfortably between a cushion and a comforter. In her arms, resting against her chest is a baby girl who is avidly nursing on Daria's exposed breast. The screech of a deadbolt is heard from the front door followed by a brief burst of sunlight as Helen lets herself in and then quickly closes the door behind her as

quietly as possible. She walks up to Daria who, since the very sound of the lock could have changed the situation from a moment of peace and quiet to one of ear piercing noise, has turned her attention towards Hellen with a scowl on her face.)

>
Helen: (Pads as quietly as possible over to the couch and then has a seat next to Daria before speaking in a whisper) Hi sweetie,sorry to just let myself in like that but I didn't want to wake the babies with the doorbell. Besides, awake or asleep I figured you still had your hands full with them. (Looks Daria over) Oh my,you don't look that well at all. Having a hard time adjusting to motherhood are we?

>
Daria: You've come here to rub my face in it I see. I should have seen it coming,you've probably been waiting all my life to reap your vengeance on me for all the trouble I caused when I was this old.

>
Helen: Well,I'd be lying if I said I wasn't at least getting SOME satisfaction out of it. But I know first hand that parenting ONE newborn is hard enough,but you wound up with double trouble. So I've come to help out.....

>
Daria: (sighs in relief) Thank god,whip out a boob and take Ariel from me. I feel like the living dead and I've only been up since eight.

>
Helen: I'm afraid I can't help you there, Daria. My um,.....breasts.... have long since dried up.(smirks) How much sleep did you get before that?

>
Daria: I got sleep? (Helen covers her mouth to keep from waking the children with her laughter)

>
Helen: They do keep you on a tight schedule, don't they?

>
Daria: (groans) Yea,theirs. (Daria pulls Ariel away from her breast and hands her to Helen, after which the baby coo's a little and falls fast asleep in Helen's arms) How the hell do you do that? It took me forever to get her asleep the past couple of times.

>
Helen: (Smiles knowingly) It just takes practice sweetie,you'll learn soon enough and instinct will take over. (Looks down at Daria's still exposed breast) My,you're certainly swollen. Is Duncan jealous, what with both of them being occupied?

>
Daria: (Chuckles) A little bit,but fortunately he's not interested in the milk, just in staring at them as the continue to increase in size. It's kind of goofy if you think about it but at least that means that I don't have to try to save him any.

>
Helen: Has Duncan been helpful enough during the night?

>
Daria: Let's just say that we've come to an understanding.

>
Helen: (smirks evilly) I'm glad to hear it,most husbands are hard to get out of bed when it comes to tending to a child in the middle of the night. (Looks over at Nicodemus asleep in his stroller) Has he been fed already?

>
Daria: (groans) Not yet,I'm waiting for him to wake up on his own first. Maybe I'll be able to close my eyes for a few minutes if I'm lucky.

>
Helen: I'll tell you what,why don't you squeeze some into a bottle for him and I'll take it from here. You go get some sleep,you look absolutely dreadful.

>
Daria: Really, ...wow I must be getting better at this. (Helen and Daria share a laugh before Daria complies and heads off to the

bed room for some well earned rest)

>
(Cut to early in the evening,fortunately Duncan was able to get off work on time today and is home with Daria trying to be as helpful as he can be. He is currently playing with Nicodemus as he sits in his stroller and laughs at the objects Duncan is waving in front of his face. Helen having been relieved once Duncan came home has herself retired back to the Morgendorffer residence for the evening. Daria, ...now awake from her afternoon's comatose like slumber is busy in the kitchen preparing dinner. No it's not lasagne. The doorbell rings which by some miracle doesn't set off the children and Daria comes walking out of the kitchen and past Duncan to answer the door. Daria knew it would be Jane,she'd shown up late enough not to get involved in any of the dirty work just like she'd done every day for the past two weeks. Not that Daria really minded that so much, ...after all she shouldn't expect her best friend to help her take care of her own children. But then again,Daria couldn't help thinking that's what friends are supposed to be there for.)

>
Jane: (POV from the outside of the house as Daria opens the door) Que pasa, mi madre? How goes the parental endeavor? (Daria merely steps aside to let Jane in and then leads the way to the kitchen. Once there Daria begins to converse with Jane in low tones)

>
Daria: I'm achy, my boobs are swollen to the size of a hot air balloon, my crotch itches from the episiotomy, despite an afternoon nap I'm still tired, and I can't have sex for another month.

>
Jane:Yea,I hear that hormone roller coaster after a birth can be a real bitch. (Beat) So.... is it feeding the little buggers that's getting to you or just everything in general?

>
Daria: (smirks) Everything in general, ...but especially feeding them. At times I wish Duncan would grow a pair of boobs and take over for me.

>
Jane: Yeesh,now there's a scary thought. Has your mother been able to help out at all?

>
Daria: As a matter of fact she has,I figured it was a matter of time before she came over to begin spoiling her grandchildren. But she's got timing, I'll give her that much.

>
Jane: (laughs) Just when you thought you were free of the parental units you go ahead and create a perfectly legitimate reason for them to walk right back into your everyday life.

>
Daria: Maybe so,but at the moment they're welcome to walk in anytime they want. This is almost too much for me to handle right now.

>
Jane: Ugh,sounds like a lot of work. Is there anything I can do to help?

>
Daria: I was wondering if you were ever going to ask.

>
Jane: What's that supposed to mean?

>
Daria: (sighs) Nothing,it's just that ever since the kids were born it's almost like you wait until you're certain that there's nothing else to be done to come over. I could really use your help sometimes Jane.

>
Jane: Daria,I work for gods sake. I don't just paint everyday you know.

>
Daria: I know,I just feel so overwhelmed. I just need more help and I can't help but wish you were around as often as you used to be.

>
Jane: I'm still around,besides what do you think I came by

here tonight for? I know there's something to be done around here.
(Beat) Speaking of work,is Duncan being of any help?

>
Daria: When he's home, he's a godsend. In the middle of the night is sometimes a different story though.

>
Jane: Doesn't want to get out of that nice warm bed huh? Can't say I blame him,it must be a special kind of guy who'll get out of bed to take care of two newborns in the middle of the night while allowing you to sleep. Too bad Duncan can't be that kind of guy.....

>
Daria: He is,I'm just still in the middle of training him to be that way. He'll get there soon enough. Of coarse that'll probably be when I don't need him to get up anymore.

>
Jane: (Shakes her head) And all this happens during the night.

>
Daria: Yea,....but like I said. During the day when he's home is a whole new ball game.

>
Jane: Oh well,at least he's helpful period and not one of those dead beat dads.

>
Daria: Nope, ...Duncan's great. (Sighs) I just wish he could stay home with me.

>
Jane: Yea,I can imagine. But somebody has to go out and bring in the money while you're out on maternity. (Jane rubs her hands together in foreshadow of an upcoming announcement) Well,Friends are supposed to be there when you need help the most. So here I am,what can I do for you my friend? (Daria pauses to sniff the air and then smirks at Jane with malicious intent)

>
Daria: Funny you should say that,I smell a "package" in delivery. And it's not arriving by UPS that's for sure. It's probably Nicodemus,he hasn't gone all day. Wanna help me change him? (Jane wears a disgusted expression on her face as she puts thought into her response)

>
Jane: I do seem to pick the worst times to be helpful don't I? (Daria smiles at her friend and escorts her back into the living room where Duncan has already begun preparing the baby)

>
(Cut to the Morgendorffer household that same night as Helen and Jake are preparing for bed. Helen having changed into a sleep shirt already watches as Jake walks around the bedroom bath area looking for his electric shaver. Helen sighs as she gives up on waiting for Jake to join her and she climbs under the covers by herself)

>
Helen: Jake for gods sake,would it kill you to just for once use a regular razor like the rest of the male population?

>
Jake: (who is now searching the cabinet underneath the sink in the master bathroom) Helen, ...you know I have sensitive skin. If I just use a razor then I'll break out in a rash again.

>
Helen: (shakes her head in pity) And I thought men were supposed to be rough and tough when it came to such things. How did you ever manage to get by in that military school your father shipped you off to?

>
Jake: Hey, ...it takes a little bit more than not using a razor to keep old Jake from getting by. (Starts going off into one of his rants again) Lousy stinking father, "you bring it on yourself" he says. "Can't fight off bullies with an electric razor" he says..... (Helen in the meantime is trying to forget that she's ever said anything on the subject until Jake reaches the very peak of his ranting at which point Helen feels obligated to change the subject in order to preserve peace in the neighborhood. Helen could just see

Jake now,climbing a clock tower somewhere with a rifle and taking out a dozen or so students at the old academy just because they all attended the same hell Jake did but without having to endure his father.)

>
Helen: You know I dropped in on Daria today..... (Jake stops ranting at the mention of Daria and her family additions) The grandchildren look absolutely adorable.

>
Jake: What,.....you went to see Daria today? Helen, why didn't you tell me? I would have wanted to go.

>
Helen: Jake,.....they're newborns not energetic toddlers. Besides, ...do you remember what happened the LAST time you tried to pay attention to a baby?

>
Jake: (looks sullen) Yea,I scared it and the poor little guy cried for hours. But that was an accident Helen,I swear.

>
Helen: I know but right now it's just not worth the chance of a repeat occurrence. Daria is tired enough as it is now that she has her hands full,and the only reason I went over to visit so soon is because I'm actually experienced in the role as a mother and I thought Daria could use some assistance. And as it turned out I was right.

>
Jake: The little monsters giving her hell are they?

>
Helen: Jake, ...they are NOT monsters. They're two adorable newborns and they have no control over the way they act yet. They DO act a LITTLE odd once in a while though,this afternoon for example. While Daria was sleeping I was tending to the kids and they kept looking past me and laughing at something. Which is strange because newborns can't really see that far in the first place, ..besides. There was nothing behind me but the wall ten feet away.

>
Jake: I'm sure it's just you're imagination getting to you. If there's one thing that kids pick up quickly it's how to push your buttons.

>
Helen: Jake,they're two weeks old. They don't even know what buttons are yet.

>
Jake: Oh they'll learn, ...trust me on that. Of coarse my father always claimed he didn't have buttons that could be pushed,but I proved him WRONG! (Beat) The next day he shipped me off to military school. (Beat) Heartless BASTARD!! (Helen pinches her sinuses as she lets out a heavy sigh)

>
(Cut to three days later. It is morning sometime around eleven AM. The scene is inside Jane's home, Jane herself is sitting on the couch eating a bowl of cereal and watching some show on pottery when the phone rings. Reluctantly Jane gets up off the couch to answer)

>
Jane: Yo.....

>
Daria: Hey Grandma,it's time to take your damned pills.

>
Jane: (chuckles) Isn't that what you should be saying to your own mother these days? (Awkward silence) So what's up amiga?

>
Daria: You feel up to doing anything?

>
Jane: I should ask you the same thing,why what's up?

>
Daria: My mom came over again to relieve me for a while, I was wondering if you wanted to go grab a bite to eat or something.

>
Jane: Itching to get out of the house are we?

>
Daria: As if I were under attack by a swarm of mosquitos. I

think I'm gonna go nuts if I don't get out of here for at least a little bit.

>
Jane: And your mom's okay with that?

>
Daria: Are you kidding? She suggested it,now come pick my ass up. I'd drive myself but I'm afraid my swollen boobs would obstruct my view of the road.

>
Jane: Or distract other drivers view from it. (Chuckles) I'll be right over. (Hangs up and the scene flashes to the pizza king about an hour later as Jane and Daria sit down with a steaming pie on the table) I see you've lost the waddle,AND most of the bulge. I guess you no longer feel like a house,huh?

>
Daria: More like a trailer home these days,but I'm getting there.

>
Jane: (smiles) The Daria I know is slowly returning to the world of the damned.

>
Daria: Well it certainly can't be heaven, ...or else Kevin wouldn't still be alive.

>
Jane: (leans back in her seat) What are you talking about,Kevin's dead. He's been that way for the past six months,of course what with his mind having been atrophied all of his life the body couldn't tell the difference and just kept trying to go about his normal routine of taking up oxygen during the six hours he was on life support.

>
Daria: When the hell did THIS happen,(smirks) and HOW?

>
Jane: He was playing for the Washington sentinels when, while running down field to the end zone, the wrong one mind you, he tripped over his own shoe laces and fell face first into the astro-turf breaking his nose and shoving the cartilage up into his brain. (Beat) The face mask on his helmet was defective I guess.

>
Daria: Must have been a lot of cartilage considering how much empty space was up there. (Beat) How did Brittany take it?

>
Jane: I think she cried for a whole half of a second before being hit on by one of the other players. She waited the six hours to order his removal from life support out of respect for their short marriage. I hear she's engaged to be married now.

>
Daria: Some people just heal quickly I guess.

>
Jane: Yup,so how's parenthood? You looked like you wanted to cry when I first picked you up.

>
Daria: (rubs under her eyes just in case she was still tearing up a little) Sorry about that,it's just these damned hormone swings. For no reason I could fathom, ...I just felt so overwhelmed all of a sudden and I couldn't control this sudden urge to cry.

(Beat) Dammit,I never cry!

>
Jane: Sure you do,what about when your sister died?

>
Daria: (mumbles) That was different.....

>
Jane: Okay,I'll give you that. There were extenuating circumstances involved. (Sighs) Well, ...then I guess you're just experiencing post birth something or other.

>
Daria: You mean post-partum depression?

>
Jane: See, ...and you claimed that you didn't know why you felt this way.

>
Daria: I am not depressed,and I'm NOT a misery chick.

>
Jane: Who said you were? And even if that WERE the case, ...misery loves company which would explain my presence here.

>
Daria: (looks at Jane crossly) You're not going to whip out a strap on and try to use it on me or something are you?

>
Jane: (laughs hysterically) Where the hell did THAT come from?

>
Daria: I saw it on the Internet once,two girls getting it on. One of them with a strap on and the caption was that misery loved company. (Beat) I guess it just creeped me out when you said it,I had the sudden impression that you were the one who created the picture.

>
Jane: Um.....no, I honestly don't think I'm into that sort of thing. At least not with another girl,TIM on the other hand is quite adept with tools of a sexual nature.

>
Daria: (looking disgusted) I don't even wanna know.

>
Jane: Oh come on,you mean you've never tried anything other than plain ordinary five minute intercourse?

>
Daria: (smirks lustfully) It's NEVER lasted only five minutes, Jane. (Blushes when she realizes that she's just loosed some very personal information)

>
Jane: (arcs an eyebrow) Experiencing another one of those hormone swings are we? (Daria looks away shamefully)

>
Daria: Sorry....

>
Jane: Don't worry about it,it happens to all of us. I in particular just happen to be more open about it. (Beat)

Soooooooooooo.....?

>
Daria: So, ...what?

>
Jane: Let's hear it,what used to go on in the bedroom before you blew up like a balloon?

>
Daria: THAT,is NONE of your business, Jane. (Jane crosses her arms and stares. Daria after a few minutes realizes that Jane intends to pry until the cows come home so she might as well trust her with a few small tidbits of info.) (Loud sigh) Alright,what do you want to know?

>
Jane: Oh don't be so dramatic about it,I don't want to know every little moan and groan you make. I just want to trade a little saddle info,between friends. I'll give up some juicy details of my own.

>
Daria: I doubt anything you've done could be considered juicy.

>
Jane: Now now,don't judge unless you've tried these things for yourself. Toys? (Daria shakes her head no) oils? (No again) Felacio....? (Daria looks away)

>
Daria: It didn't really work out the one time we tried it.

>
Jane: What happened?

>
Daria: We tried it, and I was doing okay when I accidentally nipped him with my teeth. (Jane cringes) That pretty much put an end to that.

>
Jane: I imagine it WOULD,how about the other way around?

>
Daria: Nah,I've never really been into that sort of thing. Considering what those parts of the body are used for and all.

>
Jane : But you had no problem doing it to him?

>
Daria:(scowls) I was trying to be open about experimentation.

>
Jane: What better way to be open, ...especially since you can't have sex for a few weeks. (Smirks as Daria rolls her eyes)

>
Daria: All right that's enough about my life,turn the tables around. What have YOU done, ...and be mindful. My ears are sensitive.

>
Jane: I've pretty much done everything except the lesbian thing. Of coarse,I've never done any of it while sky diving,or scuba...

>
Daria: I think that's about enough of story hour, ...thanks for the visuals Jane. I have a hard enough time looking at the tape Duncan made of the births. (Jane laughs)

>
Jane: I've got to admit, I'm jealous Daria.

>
Daria: You're jealous of staying up twenty four seven, ..looking like a zombie, swollen breasts, soiled diapers? What is there to be jealous of?

>
Jane: That little moment when you got to hold them for the first time, smile at them and be proud of them just for being born.

>
Daria: That's funny,I never pictured you as the motherly type, Jane.

>
Jane: I've never pictured myself that way either,it just sort of dawned on me. I'm thinking of talking to Tim about trying, ...I wonder how receptive he'll be?

>
Daria: Jane, you have no idea the world you're hoping to bring yourself into.

>
Jane: I'm not hoping to bring myself into a world,I'm hoping to bring someone else into it. I figure I might fare just a little bit better than most first timers with the advanced Intel you'll be able to provide me with.

>
Daria: (shrugs) Good luck,you'll NEED it.

>
Jane: Thanks old friend. (Beat) By the way,I will try to be there for you more often. I figure it can serve as occupational training.

>
Daria: How comforting to know that you'll only help if it serves your purpose.

>
Jane: Hey, ...it's what I'm here for.

>
Daria: (long pause) How about Trent and Maria as long as we're discussing biological replication?

>
Jane: I dunno,I haven't heard a peep out of them on the subject. (Shrugs) Maybe they just don't want any accidents.

>
Daria: As much of a sexaholic as Maria is,..... I'm surprised they haven't had FIVE accidents by now.

>
Jane: Nah,she uses birth control AND a rubber rain coat. I doubt she's looking for an accident before she's ready.

>
Daria: (shrugs) To each their own I guess. (Beat) I can't believe we're actually sitting in a pizza shop discussing who's having kids and who isn't.

>
Jane: I guess it's just something a mother likes to do. (Daria stares at Jane in thought)

>
Daria: God, I feel old.....(Jane bursts into laughter and pounds the table a few times)

>
(The scene fades to the evening a week later. The scene is a dark room in Daria's home,a sliver of light appears from a crack in the door way as it inches open far enough for Daria to peek in. The cribs can be seen illuminated in the sliver of light being allowed into the room. The children are fast asleep for once, a miracle in Daria's mind, but still Daria feels compelled to check on them by fears and phobias of all the things she'd heard can happen to a sleeping infant. She creeps into the room and closing the door just enough to again allow only a sliver of light in. Between the two cribs Daria sat down on a folding chair shifting in her seat as she

moved to look at each sleeping child. Ariel lay sleeping with her thumb stuck in her mouth, she kicked one of her legs in her sleep. Perhaps because of a dream she was having, or maybe just some sort of reflex action. Either way,it was adorable. It seemed to strange,there was so much work involved it seemed almost impossible that a single moment could make it all worth while, but yet as she watched her baby girl sleep that's exactly how she felt. Daria turned her attention to Nicodemus who to Daria's surprise was wide awake and had been watching her this whole time without making a sound. He smiled at seeing his mother, ...probably because he thought it was feeding time.)

>
Daria: (VO) Breasts,even as an infant that's all you guys think about. (Nick extended his arms outward as if to reach for her and then let them drop onto the mattress. Daria smiled back and picked him up out of his crib and placed him against her shoulder while patting him on the back. He cooed at being held by his mother and then burped. And the strange thing was that nick didn't even have to cry for his mother to come burp him, Daria just knew. Maybe Helen was right, Daria thought to herself, instinct after a while just seems to click in once the behavioral patterns had been learned.) (VO) Maybe things won't be so bad after all..... (Daria smiled as she held the baby, she couldn't believe that he was still quiet. Duncan quietly entered the room several hours later to find Daria sitting in the recliner in the corner of the room, she still held little Nick in her arms, and they were both fast asleep. He almost hated to take him from her,but it was feeding time and Duncan had already warmed the bottles Daria had set aside earlier. As much as Daria had stopped to admire her children, ...Duncan felt compelled to stop and admire Daria for everything she had accomplished through her hard work. He knew he could never have gone though what she had and survived, and not just for the physical reasons, but for the emotional as well. Duncan slipped Nick from her arms and the picked Ariel out of her crib and took a position in the recliner on the opposite side of the cribs. Daria didn't have to wake up to tend the children a single time that night.)

>
The

End.....

.....

>

>Note: Suggestions and commentary are always welcome, ...I may be contacted at wildgoose81@hotmail.com <div>

17. The Empty Hourglass

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV and Viacom productions.

>
Note: This story is the next in the Unseen Phenomenon Series. It takes place approximately thirteen years after "Whichever Way the Wind Blows"

>

>
 The Empty Hourglass

> By
 Wildgoose

>

> The house was Dark with exception of the dim glow of a flourescent lamp lining the top of the stove,it was one in the morning in the eastern US time zone. A weary Jake makes his way down the stairs occasionally tripping over this, that, and the other thing. He couldn't sleep this night,he had once again burst a blood vessel in one of his eyes and the pain killers were not being as

effective as they had been on past occasions and as such Jake had tossed and turned for half the night. It was a strange pain he felt,phantom pains as the doctor had put it. Where the pain caused by one thing manifests itself in a completely different part of the body. "Ha,what the hell do doctors know. They can't even tell the body that it's having pain in the wrong place." Jake scoffed as he rubbed the persistent ache towards the back of his head. "Control your blood pressure they say,it's too high they say. I'll be the judge of my own body dammit,maybe if I burst all of those little buggers there won't be any left to burst." Jake said to himself as he continued to rant finally arriving at his destination in the kitchen as he did so. Jake paused as he opened the refrigerator door, ...the light bulb inside the unit cast an almost soothing glow about the white linoleum floor. A red LED number on the nearby answering machine displayed the number one indicating that it still held the message from his seven year old granddaughter who had called from Scotland earlier that day. The thought of Daria, ...her husband, and their granddaughter vacationing for the summer over seas passed through Jake's mind as he connected a recent postcard with their picture on it with the message on the answering machine. Jake withdrew a plate of leftover lasagna from the fridge and placed it down on the kitchen table without even turning on the lights. He didn't want to wake Helen up for fear of what she would say to him,another one of her hour long lectures again no doubt. "For god's sake Jake,the doctor TOLD you that you have to watch your cholesterol. You DON'T want another heart attack do you? Your first one has put enough of a strain on this family already." Helen's voice pierced Jake's brain as the thought of her last lecture rang as clearly in his ears as if she were actually talking to him right now. "Don't need another one of THOSE do we,nope don't want to put any more strain on the old family now DO we" Jake said to himself as he sighed and thought of his granddaughter once again.
 Jake walked over to the answering machine and turned down the volume before pressing the play button so as not to wake Helen upstairs,... She always was a light sleeper. A smile crept over his face as Ariel's voice came over the speaker as clearly as if it were stereo, "Okay maybe not stereo,but who cares. It's my kiddo's kid." "Hi granpa" said the little girls voice just before she began to describe what a great time she was having and that she had met some kids her age over there. A tear came to his eye as he pictured her the day she was born and Daria reluctantly allowed him to hold her for the first time. It was like magic to him,such a tiny person she was and yet so beautiful. And the fact that she came from his little girl made her all the more perfect. Jake wiped the tear from his cheek and pressed at his left eye which had felt like it had been under pressure since that blood vessel burst earlier that day. The ache at the back of his head seemed to lighten when he did this so he tried to keep pressing against his eye as he moved to sit down at the kitchen table as the message on the machine ended with a beep. Jake sat down at the table and put his head down hoping that the cool surface would offer some relief from his constant discomfort. As his head came to rest on the table Jake felt a sudden slight breeze,almost unnoticeable but yet still there if only for a moment. Jake stood up and began to walk about the room in search of the drafts origin. "Maybe there's an open window",it had been hot out lately and to keep down energy costs he and Helen had been putting fans in the windows during the day instead of using the central air and then shutting the windows at night when it got cooler. "Probably forgot to close one, ...that's all." To Jake's sudden surprise there came a reply to his words which he had intended

to be heard by only himself.

> "Nope,they're all closed" said a voice as a man appeared to step out of the shadows. "You always were good about securing the house before you went to bed,Helen may have to get used to doing that on her own from now on though." Jake felt the sudden urge to pee himself as the man came close enough for Jake to recognize his face in the low light,it was Paul (1). "What,what are YOU doing here?" Jake stammered "You promised,I remember it perfectly." (2) Paul crossed his arms across his chest and studied Jake for a moment before he chose to reply, "Yes,and I held up my end of it and then some. In fact, ...I even gave you some extra time so that you could get to know Ariel. The original deal was to let you live long enough to see Daria married rather than when you were supposed to go,if I had wanted to be literal about it I could have had you drop as soon as the ceremony ended. That WOULD be characteristic of my sense of humor you know." (3) Paul stated before a worried Jake Morgendorffer. Jake paused for several minutes before saying another word, " Does it have to be NOW? What about my family, What about Helen? She's not as young as she used to be you know." Paul tried not laugh at Jake's remarks as he pleaded for time that just wasn't there anymore. "Neither are you, Jake. And Helen can take care of herself,she'll have to because you no longer have a say in the matter" At this Paul motioned for Jake to turn around and look back at the kitchen table which he had left only moments ago. To Jake's semi-horror he turned to see his lifeless form lying head down on the table,his weight being supported by both the chair and the fact that his chest was resting against the table. In an odd sort of way he actually looked asleep,...what with his cold uneaten plate of leftover lasagna still out in front of him. "I never felt it,how?" Paul approached Jake and placed a hand on his shoulder "Sudden stroke,it's quick and painless. Sometimes it's almost as good as going in your sleep,which is how I was GOING to go about things. That is until you decided to head down stairs and get a midnight snack. But then now that I think about it, ...this was probably better. At least Helen won't have to wake up next to you in the morning,that tends to be just a tad more traumatic because she'll want to make herself believe at first that this was all a dream." Paul was about to continue but he is cut off by a saddened Jake wanting to find SOME way to hold on for just a moment longer. " Don't I even get a chance to say goodbye to Helen?" Paul scowled at this, "You'd haunt her Jake,not intentionally of course. But you'd give her clues to your presence every chance you got and you know what,the longer it takes for her to let go the more painful it will be for her. I've seen it before,some people inadvertently drive their spouse to suicide because they don't want to deal with the pain of not letting go anymore. And then they can NEVER be together again,they create their own personal hell. A clean break is the only way in your case, Jake. You have to deal with it,however you won't be alone." Paul motions for Jake to turn around yet again and as he does so he comes face to face with Quinn.
 "Hi dad" Quinn sputtered, "I've missed you so much." Jake stood there wide eyed as he attempted to take in the situation. Jake began to look Quinn up and down paying specific attention to the cobalt blue overcoat. Finally he pushed all of this aside and gave her a good stiff hug. Quinn just smiled and returned his embrace "We've got a lot to talk about,let's get you out of here before mom wakes up. We can talk in my office,you'll love what I've done with it." Jake while still holding his belated daughter in his embrace squeezes out another few words before he begins to cry. "Where the hell have you been all this time?" Quinn smiled at the

sound of his habitual use of the word and replied "Not hell,that's for damned sure. Come on,we'll go find some old relatives to talk to before mom wakes up and finds you,we'll the physical you lying on the table there." Quinn stares at Jake's lifeless body still at the kitchen table for a moment before making additional comments, "a sudden stroke huh,well it beats two bullets in the chest that's for sure." (4) Quinn turns to thank Paul for letting her know about her fathers imminent passing but finds that he has vanished into the shadows from whence he had first made his appearance. "I hate it when he does that,oh well what are you gonna do? Come on dad,we can come back for the funeral if you want. That way you can see everybody all at once." "Even my dad" Jake quipped nervously while giving the impression that he might go off on either one of his rants or dwell on memory about what a horrible childhood he had because of Mad Dog Morgendorffer. "No" Quinn replied sternly "He DID go to hell,although I heard he almost got kicked out for threatening to send the devil to your old military academy. I'm told god STILL gets a laugh out of that one every now and again. Now come on,it's a lot easier than you think." With that Quinn takes Jake by the hand and leads him out of the kitchen fading from view as they went.

> Helen was distraught later that morning when she came downstairs for breakfast and found Jake had been dead for several hours. She cried profusely,called Daria to come home early from vacation and then called everybody else who was important, ...Amy, Rita, and just about everybody else whether she liked them or not. Daria's daughter Ariel never really understood the concept of death at that time,she just knew what Daria and Duncan had explained to her and could only accept it as something that just..... was. No matter how much she wanted to "go find granpa" as she put it, wherever it was that he went. Daria herself understood better than anyone as she had knowledge of Jake's "extension" (5) and knew that this moment was inevitable. In fact she was surprised Jake had held out this long,but in knowing Daria found it difficult to weep. As far as she was concerned her father wasn't gone,just out of touch for an undetermined number of years.

>The End.....

>Footnotes :

>1) Paul was introduced in "A New experience" as being the angel of death.

>2) The promise Jake mentioned was in vague reference to "A New Experience" where Paul had told Daria that Jake, when he had his heart attack, pleaded for more time so that he might be able to see one or both of his daughters walk down the isle to be married.

>3) Paul has a rather unorthodox sense of humor which on occasion has gotten him into trouble. This is mentioned in "All Good Things" where he was temporarily reassigned because when a man was hit and killed by a bus he walked up to the man,or his soul for that matter,and asked if the man would mind going through it again because Paul had forgotten to put film in his camera.

>4) A reference to "All Good Things" Where Quinn had been murdered by an armed bank robber who put two forty four magnum hollow points through her chest for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

>5) A reference to "A New Experience", Paul had told Daria about her fathers wish to see her walk down the isle someday and of the favor he had granted because of that wish.

> <p><p>

18. Musings

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV and Viacom productions.

>
Note : This story is the next in the Unseen Phenomenon Series,... it takes place at roughly the same time as "The Empty Hourglass."

>

>
 Musings

> By
 Wildgoose

>

>
 (It was late in the afternoon as Daria peered out the window over the vast field of tall grass out side. The horizon glowed with a deep orange as the sun disappeared from view,it was likely already night over in the states. Daria sighed as a cyclic pulse rang in her ear from the receiver of the phone indicating that no one on the other end had picked up. After the tenth ring, Daria was all set to surrender to the fact that the recipient of her call was unavailable.....again. To Daria's surprise someone finally picked up and transmitted a voice into the telephone wire that was instantly transmitted over seas allowing the long awaited conversation to finally take place.)

>
Jane: Road kill cafâ€š', you kill it we grill it.

>
Daria: Yea,can I get a cat burger with extra tire marks,hold the fur. And do you deliver....?

>
Jane: (Laughs at hearing the voice of her long time friend) Hey Daria,.....how's your vacation in Scotland? Duncan isn't keeping you up by playing the bagpipes again, is he?

>
Daria: No,I forbade him from playing those in the house a long time ago. No matter HOW good he is at it.

>
Jane: He's that good huh?

>
Daria: Take it this way,as long as I'm not getting ready for bed at the time and nobodies pet is nearby to sing along, then I'll actually stick around to listen.

>
Jane: And when you're trying to sleep?

>
Daria: It sounds like that cat I ordered when you first picked up the phone.

>
Jane: Whoa,.....does he wear a kilt when he plays?

>
Daria: Oh hell no,he's a good looking guy but he's not THAT good looking. Besides, ...Maria looks better in one.

>
Jane: Let me guess,you walked in on Trent and Maria once didn't you?

>
Daria: And so what if I did? I don't think they heard me,and I've been purposely trying to block the memory.

>
Jane: My my, Daria. You don't still have affections for my brother do you? Find yourself thinking of him in the buff from time to time do you?

>
Daria: HELL no,I block the memory because Maria's long legs in that skirt wannabe was a turn on. And THAT scares me.....

>
Jane: Scots don't traditionally wear anything under there do they?

>
Daria: Nope.

>
Jane: You saw more than just her legs didn't you.....

>
Daria: Yup.....

>
Jane: You're right, ...keep blocking that memory. We want to keep you on the straight and level.

>
Daria: Thanks for the support.

>
Jane: Hey, ...it's what I'm here for. So what else is new now that you've managed to catch me at home.

>
Daria: Not a whole lot really,the kids are having a ball playing hide and seek in a field of tall grass. And I 've been trying to get you on the phone all week long. Where the hell have you been?

>
Jane: Hey,I've been busy.

>
Daria: You and Tim went down to the Florida keys again didn't you?

>
Jane: It's one of the perks of having our own plane.....

>
Daria: And money.....

>
Jane: Hey, ...we sent some your way at your wedding.

>
Daria: That's not what I was trying to get at, ..but thank you. Incidentally, ...we've had no need to touch any of it yet.

>
Jane: Cool deal, ...but is that out of pride or are you actually saving it for an emergency?

>
Daria: As per instruction, Jane. (Jane laughs) Besides, ...I like watching the interest compound as the money sits in the bank.

>
Jane: Yea, a cool mill does tend to do that quickly. (Beat)Sorry I didn't tell you that I was going away,..... it was sort of a spur of the moment thing. You understand, ..right?

>
Daria: I guess I don't really have a choice. By chance does this have anything to do with the um.....problem?

>
Jane: (in a slightly depressed tone of voice) Yea,the traditional remedies just aren't working.

>
Daria: (sighs) Are you sure the problem is with you and not HIM?

>
Jane: (chuckles nervously) Um....yea,pretty sure. The doc says I'm defective,but he still says we've got a shot at it if we really try. So Tim and I have been trying to get away a lot,give ourselves plenty of chances to um,correct the problem.

>
Daria: Jane,are you SURE you want kids anyway? I mean,they ARE a handful.

>
Jane: Yea,I can see how much yours are driving you to the brink of insanity. But you hide the stress well in the form of contentedness.

>
Daria: Alright, ...I get the point. I haven't been spending enough time with you and you feel left out.

>
Jane: See what I mean, even when you talk to ME you sound like a good mother. Which means even when you're not with your kids you're thinking about them. Anything that can make somebody like YOU think about somebody else constantly can't be ALL bad. (Sighs) But as it stands I may not be able to have one.

>
Daria: (scowls) What do you mean "somebody like me"?

>
Jane: Nothing,I just mean. Well,you don't take to being around people easily, that's all.

>
Daria: (sighs heavily and drops it) You know,if you really want a kid that badly then there's always adoption.

>
Jane: (pauses for a moment in thought before answering) Nah, ...that's not for me. If you get an older kid then it's incredibly hard not to get a problem child to say nothing about getting the kid

to acknowledge you as it's new mother. And even if you got a newborn,there's always the chance of a legal battle involving the birth mother. That happens more and more frequently these days you know.

>
Daria: You've been watching too much court Tv,sometimes you've just got to take your chances.

>
Jane: You're absolutely right, Daria. Want to donate an egg to me? (A long awkward pause ensues) Daria,it was a joke. I was kidding with you.

>
Daria: You sure about that?

>
Jane: Pretty sure,I'm afraid the kid would turn out to be something like your father. Personality traits ARE genetic you know.(Daria tries to keep herself from laughing as she imagines Jake as he is now in the body of a toddler)

>
Daria: Can't say I blame you there. (Jane laughs nervously as she wasn't quite sure if Daria was going to take that personally or not) Has the doctor suggested trying fertility drugs?

>
Jane: (scoffs) Please,do you have any idea what happens to people who take fertility drugs?

>
Daria: Yea,they end up on sick sad world after giving birth to quint. Haven't you always wanted to get on Tv?

>
Jane: Mtv maybe,but not as the sick and pathetic. I've always seen myself as creating an instructional video for the newly budding artist. You know,for those people who are too lazy to leave the home and take a class.

>
Daria: Like the ones who eventually gain so much weight that they can't leave the bed and have to have the walls of their home cut out so they can leave for treatment?

>
Jane: Especially THOSE people,they'd be my captive audience. (Daria laughs. In the background Jane can hear Ariel come into the house slamming the front door behind her so that Nicodemus can't follow as closely behind)

>
Ariel: (in the background) Mommy,lookit. Grasshopper..... (Ariel yelps as the insect jumps out of her hand and Nicodemus who has now made his way into the house attempts to stomp it flat) No,mommy he's going to hurt it.

>
Daria: (sighs) You don't by chance want mine do you? (Jane bursts out laughing)

>
Jane: I'll let you go, ...it sounds like you've got your hands full.

>
Daria: No,but I will in a minute. Later.....

>
Jane: Later..... (Both Daria and Jane hang up and Daria turns to look at her two children who have turned their attention from the bug to wrestling with each other. The bug has in the meantime taken the opportunity to escape to somewhere else in the house)

>
Daria: (VO) You know,I really should stop this. (Beat) But as long as they're not breaking anything..... (Out loud) Ariel,go for the body! The body.....!! (VO) Hell,this beats pro wrestling AND I save a few bucks in the process. (Daria continues to look on at the kids as Duncan enters the room from another part of the house to see what the commotion is about)

>
(The scene fades to an hour later,Daria is once again talking to Jane on the phone.)

>
Jane: So the little monsters were beating the hell out of each other over a grasshopper?

>
Daria: Yea,go figure. And the worst part was that I actually found it all amusing.

>
Jane: The grasshopper or them beating the crap out of each

other?

>
Daria: It reminded me of Quinn when she was that age.

>
Jane: Here we go,down memory lane again.

>
Daria: Oh shut up,.....It's not like I'd be able to enjoy them if she were alive you know. She'd make sure it was well known that I beat her up for being attractive and popular.

>
Jane: And WAS that the reason,dare I ask?

>
Daria: Of coarse not,it was because she was there. What other reason did I need? (Beat) And of coarse there was the little thing about the web page software.

>
Jane: Naturally. You see, ...these are the things I'm missing out on.

>
Daria: You want to be a parent so you can watch your kids beat and torment the living hell out of each other?

>
Jane: Beats out daytime Tv doesn't it?

>
Daria: I wouldn't know,I never watched that crap. Somehow I just can't see myself getting caught up in the fictitious lives of a bunch of people on Tv who do nothing but sleep with each other and plot to destroy one another through paranoid delusions.

>
Jane: Yea,you're right. Real life is NOTHING like that.

>
Daria: (Reverts to the topic discussed on the previous phone conversation) Are you sure you don't want to try your doctors suggestion?

>
Jane: (gawks on her end of the phone) Well you certainly have something on your mind tonight,afraid I might actually take you up on that offer involving your kids?

>
Daria: No,it's just that if you want them that bad then it might be a good idea to explore every possibility.

>
Jane: Eh,.....I'd prefer to do things the old fashioned way. You say the drugs are for fertility NOW,but what about in the future. What if I became addicted,I'd be spitting out kids like a rabbit. Before you know it the world would be full of Jane Ravens carbon copy's.

>
Daria: At least you could be sure that world would be a much more artistic place.

>
Jane: Maybe so, Daria. But why don't you give me some of your advice instead of fertility drugs,how did you and Duncan manage it so easily? (Daria looks off in thought for a moment as she reflects on events past.)

>
Daria: I wouldn't exactly say any of it was easy. (Daria looks about her to see if either of the kids were in earshot) It was a plain and simple accident.

>
Jane: I find that hard to believe considering how careful you and Duncan always were. (The scene blurs as Daria begins to explain just how everything started and comes back into focus seven years ago in Daria and Duncan's bedroom. The electricity is out due to a violent storm that had just recently passed through the area downing a few trees in the process. One of which happened to take a utility pole out with it along with the power. Inside the bedroom a lighted flashlight sits on a night stand next to the bed casting shadows in motion as the subjects of them move about on the bed accompanied by sounds of passion.)

>
Duncan: (Still in the midst of the activity, chuckles to himself as Daria moves about to assume the dominant position on top of him) Who says you can't have fun in the dark?

>
Daria: Probably anybody who's ever been afraid of it. (Lets out a grunt as she resumes with Duncan picking up the intensity a bit)

>
Duncan: If you don't mind my asking lass,what brought this on all of a sudden. (Daria bites her lip before responding as she continues)

>
Daria: Duncan, are you deliberately trying to kill the mood by asking such a dumb question?

>
Duncan: Not at all, love. I've just never known you to be this spontaneous about this sort of thing.

>
Daria: Who knows,maybe this whole thing about being in the dark made me feel vulnerable and the only way I could feel safe was to be close to you.

>
Duncan: (smirks) You ate those oysters I had in the fridge didn't you?

>
Daria: The whole damned bowl,they taste incredible in white marinara sauce. Bastard,if I'd known they had the same effect on women I never would have eaten.....as many.

>
Duncan: So what it comes down to is that you're just simply horny?

>
Daria: (pants and rears her head back for a moment) By George I think he's got it.

>
Duncan: (looks awkwardly up at the silhouette of Daria's face created by the flashlight) So maybe we should wait until we're doing it for the right reasons?

>
Daria: Not until I get off,.....almost there.

>
Duncan: Isn't that supposed to be MY line? (Daria leans far forward and squeezes his hips with her thighs and then seemingly collapses onto Duncan's chest with what sounded like a sigh of relief)

>
Daria: Ah,I feel better. Note to self,no more oysters before bed. (She rolls off of Duncan as if preparing for sleep) So,would you rather I do the womanly thing and talk for an hour about my feelings or should I just take after your example on previous occasions and just go right to sleep?

>
Duncan: I dunna do that.....

>
Daria: On three occasions you've done that,all things considering it's not a bad track record at all. But you know us women,...we remember every bad thing you've ever done and hold it over your head for all eternity.

>
Duncan: Aye,I should have remembered that one. (Daria turns over to rest face down on the pillow as Duncan moves to dispose of the used protection) Uh oh..... (Even in the dark you can see the whites of one of Daria eye's as it springs open wide)

>
Daria: Wait,what's uh oh?

>
Duncan: I think the thing broke.

>
Daria: What the hell does that mean,... you think the thing broke.....?

>
Duncan: (pauses for a moment as he reaches for the flashlight to aid him) I KNOW the thing broke.....

>
Daria: (rubs her face with her hands and utters a loud series of expletives while Duncan is disposing of the evidence) This is my fault I should have taken it easy.....

>
Dunacan: Don't be hard on yourself, lass. I was the one wearing it,I should have realized earlier.

>
Daria: You're right,this is all your fault.

>
Duncan: (scowls) Hey,I thought we were supporting each other here!!

>
Daria: We are,but you were dumb enough to accept all the blame so I'm being supportive by agreeing with you. (Duncan mutters a few expletives of his own as the scene blurs and comes back in on the present with Jane now laughing her head off over the phone)

picked up the phone only in time to hear the click of the receiver on the other end.) Good one Morgendorffer,you've mistaken your granddaughter for an annoying telemarketer. How dumb can you get.....? (beat) Don't answer that, Morgendorffer. (Looks about) And who the hell am I talking too? (Sighs heavily as she looks through the caller ID so that she can return the child's phone call)

>(On the other end Ariel chatted away excitedly as she told of her vacation in this other country that according to her was named after a brand of paper towel. Helen chuckled to herself for a good while at that one because if you thought about it, ...it did sound that way. After a long winded talk with her granddaughter, Daria decided to take over the conversation for a while sending Ariel off to play in the next room.)

>
Daria: Hey mom,I see Ariel's managed to master the telephone.

>
Helen: She's female sweetie,that's one of the FIRST things we master is the telephone.

>
Daria: Funny,I don't recall even using it until I was old enough to cancel a meeting with one of my teachers for you. (Helen laughs nervously)

>
Helen: Yes well,you weren't much of a conversationalist back then.

>
Daria: Like I am now...? And don't even start with that you're more well adjusted crap,I still answer the phone with hello, ...who are you, ...what do you want, ...goodbye.

>
Helen: I swear you and your husband are the same person some times,you have exactly the same attitude when it comes to talking to people.

>
Daria: (chuckles) I'll take that as a compliment then. (Beat) So how's dad doing?

>
Helen: Surprisingly well considering,

>
Daria: That could mean any one of a million things, mom. Care to be more specific?

>
Helen: Well, ...I asked him to go to the doctor and he didn't even put up a fight. He just agreed to go.

>
Daria: Wait,dad hasn't been feeling well? His heart isn't acting up again is it?

>
Helen: Oh no,....he's just had a persistent headache for a couple of days.

>
Daria: (impersonates Swartzenegger from "Kindergarten Cop") It's NOT a tumor.....

>
Helen: Excuse me...?

>
Daria: Oh nothing,just reassuring myself.

>
Helen: I see,well for your sake I hope you're right. Because if you've just jinxed your father....

>
Daria: (rolls her eyes in contempt) Oh give me a break mom,you don't believe in that do you?

>
Helen: I'm a lawyer sweetie,I believe in whatever the facts support.

>
Daria: Uh huh,I'm not even going to touch that one.

>
Helen: You'd be better off,well I've got to go. I have some paper work to get back to.

>
Daria: Workaholic to the end, eh mom? (Helen just laughs as she says goodnight and hangs up. Daria smirks as she takes a moment to stare at the phone, that had to be one of the first times she actually enjoyed talking to her mother over the telephone. As she could recall, all of the other times in the past when she had talked to Helen on the phone it was because Helen had been worried about

something or other and was calling to check up on her. Daria pulls her attention away from her fascination with telecommunications and heads upstairs to go to bed. Later that night, after climbing underneath the warm covers and turning out the lights, Daria strangely finds herself restless and unable to sleep. As a result she tossed and turned until she came to the realization that her tossing was keeping Duncan awake, which usually meant that her tossing right next to him was putting him in the mood.) (VO) I might as well expend some energy as long as I'm up,who knows. It might even tire me out enough to go to sleep. Besides, ...it's only a matter of time before Duncan checks to see if I'm awake enough for sex anyway. (Daria turns towards Duncan and gives him a peck on the cheek, sure enough just as Daria had predicted, he was awake,and he got the message.)

>
(Cut to thirty minutes later,Daria and Duncan had just finished with their extra curricular activities and Daria now being exhausted from a very intense round of flat out sex, as opposed to the normal routine of love making, lie on top of Duncan resting against his chest with him still inside of her. Daria in her state of half sleep never noticed the bedroom door creek open allowing a sliver of light from the hallway to intrude upon the room. A shadowy form moved cautiously towards the bed as if the boogy man could jump out of any corner at any given time. Daria barely felt the edge of the bed dip down as weight was added to it followed by the rustling of covers that were covering Daria and her husband. Daria felt the heart of both herself and Duncan stop at the same time when Ariel's voice pierced the darkness that filled the room)

>
Ariel: I couldn't sleep mommy,I'm wanna stay with you and dad tonight. (Beat) What are you and daddy doing.....? (Neither Daria nor Duncan spoke for at least a minute as they search for some plausible line of B.S. they would be able to feed the child to get her to leave the room long enough for them to do a flight of the bumble bee in search of their sleep wear.)

>

>Duncan:Um..... We were,

>Daria: Playing a game.

>Ariel: (enthusiastically) Can I play...?

>Daria Duncan: NO!!

>
Daria: Ariel,can you stand outside for a few minutes? Daddy and I need to decide who won the game.

>
Ariel: Then I can stay with you tonight?

>
Duncan: Aye lass,then you can stay with us.

>
Ariel: Okay..... (Gets out of bed and scampers into the hallway. Daria and Duncan jump out of bed fumbling in the dark in search of their clothing)

>
Duncan: I can't believe we forgot to lock the bloody door.

>
Daria: We can't lock the door,when she came to open it and saw it was locked she'd get scared. That's just the way she is.....

>
Duncan: You think she saw anything....?

>
Daria: (rolls her eyes in the dark) She must have seen SOMETHING,otherwise she wouldn't have asked what we were doing.

>
Duncan: Dammit,I blame myself. We should have finished up sooner.

>
Daria: Oh be quiet,don't rush anything. It's as much my fault as it is yours. Just give me a minute to grill her on what she thought she saw. (Daria finishes dressing and heads out into the

hallway) Hey honey,how come you can't sleep?

>
Ariel: Granpa said he had to leave.

>
Daria: (scowls) (VO) What the hell does THAT mean...? (Out loud) I don't understand,what do you mean by "granpa said he had to leave"?

>
Ariel: I had a dream about him.....

>
Daria: And.....?

>
Ariel: Granpa said he had to go somewhere. Where does granpa have to go?

>
Daria: (looking slightly perplexed that her child would have such a strange dream) (VO) What the hell are you asking ME for,it was YOUR dream. (Out loud) Ariel,granpa isn't going anywhere. He's back at home just where we left him. And when we go home you'll see him again. Okay.....?

>
Ariel: Promise.....? (rocks back and forth uneasily) Cause he came in my room and said he had to go and that he would miss me. I don't want granpa to go.....

>
Daria: I promise, grandpop isn't going anywhere but mentally insane. (Beat) Now um,about the game your father and I were playing.....

>
Ariel: Were you playing doctor....? (Daria feels her heart jump into her throat at the notion that her seven years old daughter might have an idea as to what her parents were up to in the bedroom)

>
Daria: Excuse me?

>
Ariel: My teacher at school sometimes plays that game with the school nurse in her office, ...they forget to lock the door too sometimes. Is that the game you and daddy were playing.

>
Daria: (scowls for a moment and then suppresses her anger before Ariel comes to the misconception that she's angry at her) No, ...daddy and I were playing a different game. But it's just for grownups,you're not allowed to play this game until you're much older. Okay.....?

>
Ariel: (looks down at her feet) Okay,that game looks complicated anyway. People make too many funny noises when they play it.

>
Daria: (cautiously) Ariel,when you saw your teacher. Did he or she do anything to you or ask you to play?

>
Ariel: Nope,I don't think I got seen. They were busy so I just got my band aid and left,I had a booboo on my arm from the playground and it had blood. (Beat) Are you gonna open up a can of whoop ass on my teacher and the nurse when we get home?

>
Daria: (sighs deeply in relief and then scowls) Ariel, ...you have two choices. Either you stop using that A- word or you stop watching Tv altogether.

>
Ariel: (looks down at her feet) Okay..... (Daria smiles knowing all too well which one Ariel chose)

>
Daria: And yes,I am. A very very large KEG. (Beat) Ariel,that was a very mature thing you did by leaving the room. I'm proud of you for using good judgement,but you should have told somebody sooner about what they were doing, okay?

>
Ariel:Okay. (looks up at her mother with intrigue) Can I stay with you and daddy now?

>
Daria: Yes,you can stay with us. (Picks Ariel up and carries her into the room)

>
(The scene cuts to about eight o'clock back in the US, Helen opens her still heavy eyes to find that she is alone in bed this morning.)

>
Helen: (VO) Oh for gods sake, Jake must have gotten up for a

midnight snack and fallen asleep on the couch again. God, ...I hate it when he does that. (Helen tosses the covers off herself in an effort to bring herself further into consciousness. In attempt to keep the spice in their relationship, Helen had decided to try to peak Jake's interest by coming to bed wearing nothing but a pair of panties. While not exactly the body of a twenty year old, Helen has still managed to keep herself in reasonably good shape. Something she notices for herself as she passes the mirror in search of her robe. Helen stops in front of the mirror pushes her full breasts up against her body and then watches as they flop back down against her chest.) At least they're not sagging TOO much..... (Helen finds her robe and heads down the stairs to find Jake. Upon reaching the bottom of the stairs Helen looks about to find that the couch is undisturbed) He's never been on the couch,where could he be? (In a slightly louder tone of voice) Jake,? (louder) Jake where the HELL are you hiding at? (Disgusted) Oh,I swear Jake. If you went out on a drive to the store at this time of the morning JUST to get yourself a sandwich you could have made here at home..... As if we don't have any food in the house. (Helen walks into the kitchen and to her amazement finds Jake with his head down on the table and a cold plate of lasagna out in front of him) (VO) Now there's a first..... (Out loud) Jake, for gods sake get up. You're going to hurt your back if you stay like that. Honestly,you're the only person your age who could possibly be comfortable with falling asleep at the kitchen table. (Helen shakes Jake's shoulder but he doesn't stir. A loud rustle of Jakes red striped pajamas is heard as Helen shakes him harder) Come on Jake,you can't stay here all day. Get up...! (She shakes him again and his head just turns to the side somewhat. Helen moves to smack his cheek only to discover that he is cool to the touch. A feeling of panic begins to flood Helen's mind as she places her finger against Jake's neck to check his pulse. Her lips begin to tremble as reality sets in,her knee's weaken and she sinks into the chair next to Jake) Oh god Jakie,no. NO..... (Helen begins to sob uncontrollably, her tears soaking a napkin that Jake had placed on the table in preparation of his midnight snack. In a fit of despair Helen wraps her arms about Jake's body in a desperate attempt to hold on to her life as she knew it. But it was long for naught,Jake had been dead for several hours now.)

>
(The scene cuts to Scotland. It is mid morning of the same day, ...Duncan has long since gotten out of bed along with Ariel and is downstairs cooking breakfast for everybody. Daria heads down the stairs as everyone else is finishing breakfast, the kids come bustling past her into the living room to watch the morning Tv programs. Upon entering the kitchen Duncan sets a plate down at the table for Daria, which she eagerly sits down to eat. After a few bites, Daria turns to face Duncan)

>
Daria: Ariel came to me saying she had a strange dream last night.....

>
Duncan: (turns from the stove to face Daria) Aye,? Was this while you were "grilling her?"

>
Daria: Don't be a jerk, Duncan. And yes,along with other things she told me which I will pass on to you at a more appropriate time.

>
Duncan: What the bloody hell does THAT mean?

>
Daria: It means that when we get back to the states I will need you to help me kill various members of the faculty at Oak Ridge Elementary. (Duncan is about to request more information when Daria cuts him off) But like I said,I'll grant full disclosure later on when the kids are out of the house. (Duncan concedes and allows

Daria to continue)

>
Duncan: So you were saying about Ariel...? (In the background the kids can be heard arguing with each other until finally they direct their attention towards the parents to intervene)

>
Ariel: Mommy,Nick's changing the channel on me. Make him put it back.....

>
Nicodemus: That show is stupid,it's got guys in skirts.

>
Daria: (rolls her eyes in disgust) You know,I don't recall ever giving my parents this much trouble regarding Tv.

>
Duncan: Let me guess,you didn't have much interest in the thing, period...?

>
Daria: I had my nose buried in a book most of the time. And because of it I was able to ignore the world around me for as long as I possibly good. By the time I took my nose out of the books I had gotten my first menstrual cycle and I noticed that I was growing boobs.

>
Duncan: Hopefully one of the books you read was on biology so you could be spared "the talk".

>
Daria: I did,but it didn't help. My dad tried to give it to me anyway, ...several times over the years in fact. To date he's never completed it successfully.

>
Duncan: And still, ...you're as well adjusted as you are. How do you do it...?

>
Daria: I'm just biding my time until I know the correct way to take out a rectory full of pedophile priests. I figure as long as I have pent up sexual frustration, ...I might as well vent it in a way that would benefit society.

>
Duncan: Just make sure you get it all on video. I want to be able to sell the movie rights while you're in prison.

>
Daria: Just make sure I get my cut,or I'll send my bitch after you. (Duncan laughs as another call goes out from the kids in the next room. Daria groans as she gets up to investigate)

>
Duncan: Kids,can't live with em'. Can't sell em' either..... (Duncan walks over to the kitchen table after Daria has left the room and picks up the newspaper to read it.)

>
(While Daria is in the living room mediating the dispute by shutting the Tv of all together and making the kids talk to each other instead, the phone is heard ringing several times in the kitchen. Daria feels the urge to say something to Duncan after it rings for the fifth time but then it stops and she assumes that her husband, if he knew what was good for him, got the phone. About ten minutes later Duncan pokes his head through the kitchen door with a sullen look on his face)

>
Duncan: Love,?

>
Daria: Last name Hewitt,what do you want?

>
Duncan: Can I see you in the kitchen for a minute...?

>
Daria: It can't wait...?

>
Duncan: No love,I need to talk to you. (Daria scowls as it has never been like Duncan to make demands of her. She turns to look at him and just by his eyes she can tell that something is wrong, compelling her to comply with his request. The scene changes to inside the kitchen approximately ten minutes later. Daria sits in a chair at the kitchen table with a look of complete astoundment)

>
Daria: I can't believe it,why did my mother tell YOU and not me?

>
Duncan: I dunno love,maybe she couldn't face you at the moment. She was pretty broken up about it.

>
Daria: (Scowls) Well of COARSE she's broken up about it,I'M broken up about it! I just can't believe it, ...with no warning what so ever? Did she say how it happened, ,....was it his heart again?

>
Duncan: She didn't say,she just found him this morning in the kitchen. The coroner was there as she spoke to me so it might be some time before we know. (Daria places her face in her hands as she tries to grasp the situation)

>
Daria: How am I going to face Ariel....?

>
Duncan: The best we can,I doubt she even knows what death is.

>
Daria: NO,I mean I made a promise to her last night. She had a bad dream about my dad leaving and I promised her that he wasn't going to go anywhere.

>
Duncan: Oh boy,talk about your bad timing. Do you want back up when you go to talk to her?

>
Daria: I'm not even sure HOW to talk to her. I've never broken a promise to her in my life.

>
Duncan: You had no way of knowing, ...you can't beat yourself up for that. Nobody knows the mind of death.....

>
Daria: (looking from the corner of her eyes) If you only knew..... (The scene fades as Duncan stares at Daria with a look of confusion)

>
(Cut to a day later,Duncan after spending hours on the phone wit the airline has convinced them to bump their return flight home up to that day and the family is preparing to leave for home. Ariel as well as Nicodemus have been badgering their parents all morning long as to why they have to leave for home so early, and every time Daria finds herself having to avoid giving them an answer with parental nonsense. Something she herself hated when she was a child knowing full well that "Because I said so" was merely a reason not to give an actual answer.)

>
Duncan: (As Daria deposits her suitcase near the front door, Duncan approaches her) We have to tell them, Daria. It will be so much harder on them if you just spring it on them as your father is being lowered into a deep hole in the ground.

>
Daria: (wipes a tear from the corner of her eye) I know,....but I can only imagine how their going to take it.

>
Duncan: Kids will take it as they take losing anything. They'll kick and scream and cry until they fall asleep. But what concerns me more at the moment is,how are YOU taking all of this.

>
Daria: (sighs and pauses in thought before replying) I've weathered death before.....

>
Duncan: Aye,but you've never had to explain it to a couple of seven year old children. And at least they'll express themselves though sadness. I've yet to see you shed one bloody tear.....

>
Daria: (smirks weakly) One's never enough for you, is it?

>
Duncan: (places a hand on Daria's shoulder as a gesture of support) Daria....?

>
Daria: Look, ...I'm fine. I just deal with things differently than most people. The way I look at it, ...death is just like a vacation. Sooner or later you'll meet up with everybody again, ..right?

>
Duncan: I hope so,hell would be boring without you.
Besides,I'll need somebody to plan my coup for me. (Daria chuckles very lightly before sighing and heading into the kitchen to talk to the kids and get it over with. While she is in the kitchen the doorbell rings and Duncan moves to answer it,....standing at the door is a tall man with long brown hair tied back into a ponytail. He is dressed in Khaki's from shoulder to ankle with exception of black boots and a floor length black over coat)

>
Duncan: Aye,what can I do you for?

>
Man: About a grand and a bottle of Kentucky whisky if you've got it. But be gentle for gods sake..... (He smirks as Duncan is taken completely off guard by his comment)

>
Duncan: (crosses his arms about his chest presenting himself as a very formidable and forbidding roadblock in front of his home) Who are you and who the hell sent you?

>
Man: Not hell, ...that's for certain. (Beat) I apologize for disturbing you sir,I'm an express messenger with a letter for a Mrs. Daria Macleod. Are you her...? (he smirks as Duncan expresses irritation) Sorry,I mean is she at home?

>
Duncan: Bloody yanks,what are you doing working over here?

>
Man: Yanks....? (bites his tongue to avoid speaking exactly what's on his mind) Well sir, ...us "Yanks" are sort of like a rash. We spread all over just to irritate you in every way possible.

>
Duncan: Aye, ...and you do a good job at it too.

>
Man: Thank you sir. But I'm afraid business must intervene, ...is Mrs. Macleod at home?

>
Duncan: Aye, ...but your timing couldn't be worse. She's unavailable at the moment.

>
Man: I'm sorry to hear that, are you her husband? (Duncan nods) That's fine sir, ...if you'll sign for her then I'll be on my way. (He hands Duncan a clipboard and he signs. As he does so,Duncan looks the man up and down)

>
Duncan: So how do you like this job?

>
Man: (smirks) What can I say,it's death.

>
Duncan: Aye,I hear you. The boss is a slave driver is he?

>
Man: Not at all, ...he's pretty cool. Get's a little pissed at people around here for various reasons but he's still got a lot of patience.

>
Duncan: That's rare. (The man hands Duncan an envelope and he turns to walk away as Duncan is closing the door.)

>
Man: (stops in his tracks but does not turn) Oh and Duncan,Quinn says hi. (Duncan swings the door back open to inquire how the man knew his name since he had merely signed the name Macleod,but the man is nowhere to be seen. As if he had vanished into thin air. Duncan closed the door warily and puts the letter in Daria's carry on where she'll be sure to find it. He planned to inform her just as soon as she was done with the kids.)

>
(Cut to about an hour later,Ariel has run out of the kitchen calling Daria a fibber the whole way up the stairs to her room. Nicodemus is still sitting in the kitchen trying to absorb the situation between sobs. Daria comes walking out of the kitchen seeking consolation of her own from Duncan)

>
Daria: I feel like I've destroyed their worlds. Ariel thinks I lied to her when I told her that my dad wasn't going anywhere. I should never have promised her.....

>
Duncan: It's not your fault lass, ...she'll understand that in time.

>
Daria: (sighs and looks up into Duncan's eyes) Promise.....?

>
Duncan: I'm afraid I've already learned from your mistakes, love. (Daria smirks and punches him in the shoulder) Listen, before I forget. There was a messenger at the door with a letter for you while you were in the kitchen, ...I put it in your carry on.

>
Daria: A messenger,who was it from?

>
Duncan: I didn't look, ...I was just glad the guy left. He gave me the creeps for some reason.

>
Daria: He gave YOU the creeps? Why, what did he look like?

>
Duncan: He was dressed oddly for a messenger, but nothing weird or menacing, ...tall guy, long hair, Khaki's, and a black trench coat. He just gave me the creeps for some reason. (Daria stares at him with a peculiar look) What,you act like I just stared death itself in the face.

>
(Cut to Scotland international airport later that day, Daria is busy talking on the payphone to Jane)

>
Jane: So you're on your way home then?

>
Daria: Yea, ...we're at the airport now. Our plane is scheduled to leave in an hour, so we should arrive in the states roughly about seven thirty. And that's if there are no delays.

>
Jane: Here's hoping,you just make sure you make it here safe and sound. Ever since that whole 9-11 thing I've been completely turned off about flying commercially. Yup, ...me and Tim just sick to the old seaplane to do our traveling. It's a very versatile aircraft. If we planned the route right we could make it all the way to Europe with only one stop for gas.

>
Daria: Want the keys to the house here for your next conception attempt? (Beat) Jane.....? (Daria yanks the receiver away from her ear as an air horn blast comes through loud and clear) Ow god,I'm deaf. (Beat) What the hell was THAT for?

>
Jane: Just felt the urge to be an asshole, that's all. And if we decide to go then I'll take you up on that offer, ...thanks.

>
Daria: (rubs her ear) Don't mention it. I'll see you at the airport.

>
Jane: Later..... (Hangs up and Daria turns to walk back to her family only to find Duncan searching through all of his pockets)

>
Daria: Why don't I like the sight of this?

>
Duncan: Because I think my pocket got picked,that's why. I can't find our tickets.....

>
Daria: (pinches her sinuses) Duncan,I've got enough stress right now. You DID have them with you when we arrived at the airport didn't you? You didn't forget them at the house?

>
Duncan: I forgot NOTHING,I had them on me the whole time.

>
Daria: Hey, ...you don't need to get pissy at me.

>
Duncan: (sighs) It had to be that lady I bumped into on my way out of the bathroom,bloody pick pockets.

>
Daria: What lady,what did she look like?

>
Duncan: I bumped into some woman outside of the bathroom.....I didn't get a good look,maybe a few inches taller than you. She wore this cobalt blue vest that wasn't zipped all the way.

>
Daria: (crosses her arms) You didn't get a good look but you remember a vest? Were you admiring the vest or her chest, Duncan?

>
Duncan: (scowls) It wasn't like that!! The thing just sticks out in my mind is all....

>
Daria: (glares) The thing that sticks out of your pants is more like it. (Shakes her head) You men are always thinking with the wrong head, ...you can't even tell when you've had your pocket picked. My fathers viewing is tomorrow,what the hell are we supposed to do now? (Sighs) Oh crap, ...wait. How much money was in your wallet?

>
Duncan: That's the WEIRD thing,.....it wasn't taken.

>
Daria: Let me get this straight,a pick pocket took our plane tickets but not our money? This world gets weirder and weirder every day, ...I just can't stand it. What the hell are we going to do?

>
Duncan: Calm down, we'll talk to the airport police. Maybe we can work something out with the airline after we file a report.

>
Daria: (getting frustrated) Duncan, ...read my damned lips. My father has died,I don't care about a report,I don't care about a refund. I just want to go home so I can at least have the dignity of paying my respects to my dad and family. Now go get us tickets on the next flight as long as we still have our money or there's going to be ANOTHER death in the family. (Without a word Duncan flusters and heads off toward the ticket counter. Daria meanwhile takes the kids over to a bench and has a seat near a Tv.)

>
Ariel: Mommy,are you going to make daddy go away like granpa did? (Daria looks at her daughter as if she'd just done the most horrible thing imaginable to her)

>
Daria: No,I'm just upset is all. I'd never wish your father to go away. Well, ...in this case only as far as the ticket counter. But that's not the same thing.

>
Ariel: Will dad ever go away...?

>
Daria: We all will someday,we talked about that this morning.

>
Ariel: Why.....?

>
Daria: I don't know off hand,that's just the way things are I guess.

>
Ariel: Why.....?

>
Daria: I don't know Ariel,mommy just isn't that smart.

>
Ariel; Why.....?

>
Daria: (getting irritated) Because Barney the purple freggin dinosaur said so,okay?

>
Ariel: Barney makes people die.....? (Daria stops to think of how there might actually be a truth in that. Though he may actually only contribute to the suicide rate being so high)

>
Daria: Yes,yes he does. Barney is evil and you must never watch him again.

>
Ariel: Does Barney know where granpa went?

>
Daria: (sighs as she knows this could go on for hours) No honey,Barney just drives adults to suicide. He doesn't know anything at all.

>
Ariel: I wanna go find granpa.....

>
Daria: You can't Ariel,hopefully not for a very long time.

>
Ariel: Why.....?

>
Daria: (pinches her sinuses) Ariel,.....please don't start that again. Mommy has a huge headache.

>
Ariel: Did Barney give it to you?

>
Daria: (Pauses in thought) Yes, ...yes he did.
>
Ariel: Why.....? (Daria just drops her head in her palms and for the first time since that morning, she starts to cry. The scene cuts to about an hour later when Duncan comes back to break the bad news.)
>
Duncan: (As he sits down on the bench waking his dozing wife) I'm sorry love,but the best they could do was to put us on standby for a flight in the morning. (Daria opens her eyes and straightens her glasses)
>
Daria: Why did he have to die NOW, Duncan? (Duncan kisses her forehead)
>
Duncan: I dunno love. It was just his time I guess.

>
Daria: (Sighs in understanding) I guess even a bargain has a time limit. I just hope my dad got everything he wanted out of it..... (Duncan stares at her for a moment as he tries to figure out just what the hell she's talking about. In the background a plane can be seen through the window taxiing out to the runway)
>
Duncan: (sighs) Look,I think that was supposed to be our plane.
>
Daria: (rubs her eyes as she's still half asleep) God, ...this day can't get any worse. (Ariel comes running over from a nearby trash can)
>
Ariel: Mommy,lookit what I've got!! (She holds in her hands a set of what appears to be airline tickets. Waving them in front of her parents as if she'd found gold. Duncan takes them from Ariel and looks them over several times with astonishment)
>
Duncan: Where did you find these?
>
Ariel: A lady asked me to give them to you.
>
Daria: What lady? (Ariel points to just beyond the trash can)

>
Ariel: THAT lady..... (Ariel looks to where she has just pointed but the mystery person is gone) She WAS there,honest.

>
Duncan: (turns to his wife) Daria,these are our airline tickets.

>
Daria: (sighs) What good are they to us now? The plane has left.....

>
Duncan: We missed the flight,maybe we can get a refund. (Daria sighs as she turns her attention to the airplane which can still be seen as it powers up it's engines on the runway and begins to accelerate.)

>
Daria: I guess.... (The family watches the plane speed down the runway almost to the point of takeoff. Puffs of white smoke emerge from the front tires of the aircraft which can commonly be associated with touchdown of the tires. Except the plane tilted to the left and then leveled out a fraction of a second before sparks were seen on the pavement and the nose of the aircraft crumpled to the ground with the rear of the airplane still being supported by the remaining undercarriage as it slid down the runway. A few second later the airframe itself failed at the mid section causing that to collapse and the rear section of the aircraft to peel off to the side with that section erupting in flames as it rolled away sending pieces of wing and other shrapnel flying in all directions and leaving a trail of flames and debris behind it. Daria covered the eyes of her children as she herself watched in horror at what was unfolding. People could be seen being strewn from the aircraft as the two sections traveled their separate ways,some of them still on fire. People from all directions crowd the windows and call out in despair in fear for their loved ones who may have been on the plane.

The airwaves are crowded with cell phone calls almost instantly, and just as quickly all of the nearby payphones become occupied making a call home to the states impossible. Daria and her family could do little more at the time than to look on with horror as rescue vehicles appear on the scene. The scene fades out.)

>
(The scene fades back in, The scene is that of a hotel room several hours into the evening. The children are sitting quietly on the floor near the tv set, ...it is not on, and they do not talk to each other. Duncan is nearby in the bathroom leaning on the sink counter and staring at his own reflection in the mirror,his eyes seem weary as the stress of the day has taken it's toll on him. Concern for his family is evident in his face as he muses over what could have been,if not for chance, what WOULD have been.)

>
Duncan: (muttering to himself) But were alive.....

>
(The scene cuts to the main room,Daria is sitting on the bed with the phone stuck to her ear as she attempts relentlessly to call the states. Daria dials a series of numbers yet probably for the umpteenth time that evening and for the first time since the airport Daria jumps. Only this time it is because instead of a "we are experiencing unusually high call traffic" recording, the phone actually begins to ring)

>
Daria: I don't believe it..... (Duncan calls from the bathroom inquiring as to what is going on. In the receiver against Daria's ear, the phone continues to ring until finally a well known scratchy voice answers.)

>
Jane: Hola...?

>
Daria: Jane,thank GOD!!

>
Jane: DARIA,I could say the same thing? Why the hell didn't you call sooner? Everybody over here has been going out of their minds since they heard what happened to your plane. CNN is saying they found no survivors,and your mom has been soaking the pillow on her bed ever since. Why the HELL haven't you called if you're okay? And what the hell happened,not that I'm saying you not being on the plane is a bad thing. I'm happy as all hell to hear your voice. Is your family okay?

>
Daria: We're all fine,the phone lines have just been jammed is all.

>
Jane: So what happened?

>
Daria: We never got on the plane,Our tickets got picked from Duncan's pocket and we missed the flight.

>
Jane: What flight,from what I heard the plane never got off the ground. They're saying that the front tires blew out in quick succession and after dragging on the ground the nose gear collapsed. They've been repeating footage from the Airport tower camera's all day.

>
Daria: You were worried?

>
Jane: Well DUH,I thought my best friend and her entire family suffered a fiery and insufferable death. I soaked MY pillow,but you'll keep that to yourself now won't you?

>
Daria: Perhaps.....

>
Jane: Yea,....yea,Tim is gassing up the plane as we speak. He figures if we make a stop in Nova Scotia before crossing the Atlantic then we should have gas to spare.

>
Daria: (scowls) How'd you know what I was going to ask?

>
Jane: Daria please,After what you've just been through. I wouldn't trust the airlines to take me home either. Fortunately,Tim is so meticulous about his plane that if he even THINKS a

system could malfunction, he swaps it out. Hold on..... (Tim is heard in the background over the phone) Tim's back,he says we'll be on our way in about an hour. Meet us down by the marina on the south shore, ...peer four at ten. (Beat) We should make it by morning, ...so get some sleep.

>
Daria: Speaking of sleep, ...when is he going to get any?

>
Jane: We'll be there for a good while before you come to meet us. We'll catch some Z's and some gas in the mean time. (Sighs) And don't worry,your mother made sure the funeral director was cooperative. The viewing has been pushed back a day,just so she can try to get a grip on things. But if I were you,I'd make her the next person on your call list. I'm pretty sure she could use some GOOD news about now. The fact that you're all ALIVE would be a good example.

>
Daria: (Breathes heavily into the phone) Yea,if I can get through to her.

>
Jane: I'll let you go then,later.

>
Daria: Later..... (She hangs up and stares at her children lying on the floor beyond the foot of the bed. They still appear traumatized as normally they would have inquired as to who was on the phone the moment she started to dial. But they hel their tongues until now)

>
Nick: Mom, ...was that aunt Jane? (Daria nods yes) Cool,I'm gonna make sure dad didn't cut himself shaving or something.

>
Daria: If you want to have a heart to heart with you father,....why don't you just say so? (Nick says nothing but gets up to head into the bathroom. Once he has left that part of the room, Ariel speaks up.)

>
Ariel: (Gets up off the floor and flops herself down on the bed in front of Daria) Mom,? (Daria perks her head up in response) I'm sorry for calling you a fibber,you didn't know about the man.

>
Daria: (scowls) What man...?

>
Ariel: The one in my dream, ...he brought granpa to say goodbye.

>
Daria: You didn't tell me this,what did he look like?

>
Ariel: I dunno,he wouldn't show himself. Just stayed where it was shadowy and let granpa talk to me.

>
Daria: Did the man talk at all?

>
Ariel: Uh huh,said I shouldn't be scared `cause I'd get to see granpa again someday. He was nice,and funny. Made jokes about granpa that made me laugh.

>
Daria: If all this happened,why did you think I lied to you?

>
Ariel: `cause you've always known if stuff was just a bad dream,I didn't want it to be true. (Beat)Also said that if I told you that it should just be between us `cause people would think I was weird in the head or something.

>
Daria: He's probably got a point. (Sighs) Are you okay,.....I mean with granpa dying? (Ariel shakes her head veimently)

>
Ariel: But I'll get okay. Gotta cry some more,`motions feel like a knot down here. (Gestures toward her stomach.)

>
Daria: You're pretty smart to know all that at your age.

>
Ariel: I get it from you,gonna get smart from school some

day and do.....something. I think..... (Daria chuckles and encourages her daughter to climb under the covers for bed)

>
Daria: I've got to call my mom before we go to sleep though.

>
Ariel: Will she be sad?

>
Daria: She's got a lot of reason to be,but at the same time she'll also be happy for us. It'll just be hard for her to show it. Now come on to bed. (Ariel shakes her head drawing a scowl from her mother) What do you mean no?

>
Ariel: If I come to bed with you, that means I'll be between dad and you all night.

>
Daria: (raises an eyebrow) Yea,?

>
Ariel: I saw dad had oranges and gatorade for snack earlier. (Daria yanks the top sheet of the bed along with one of the pillows and begins to make a spot for them on the floor) Whatcha doing?

>
Daria: If your father ate THAT stuff then I don't want to be in bed with him either.

>
Ariel: What about Nick?

>
Daria: Don't worry about him, ...that's how guys bond. They stink each other out of bed at night. (Ariel laughs and climbs under the sheet with Daria)

>
(The scene fades out and comes back in at the airport. All of the rescue vehicles have left the scene, ...but floodlights remain to light the area for the officials on scene who are attempting to gather all of the information they can about the crash.. The scene pulls way back to inside the airport, at the terminal the plane had departed from. Even at this time of night people bustle about trying to catch their flights since the rest of the airport is still open for business. A man wearing khaki's and a black trench coat is seen staring out the terminal window at the wreck at the far end of that particular runway, and although several guards and national guardsman pass through the area,he goes unnoticed by anyone. The man is soon joined by a woman wearing jeans and a lavender sweat shirt,....she has slung over her shoulder what looks like a high power tranquilizer gun with a scope on it)

>
Woman: Hey Paul,I heard about today. Sounds like you were pretty busy, huh?

>
Paul: Pretty,half of them are still in the waiting room. (The woman nods)

>
Woman: I also heard from one of our guardians that you pulled a family off the list at the last second. You going soft on the job?

>
Paul: (crosses his arms and scowls) Are you cupids always this nosy?

>
Woman: I really wish you wouldn't call me by my office, Paul.

>
Paul: (sighs) Sorry, Vicky. (She nods in acknowledgment) And no,...I'm not going soft. I can do the job just fine,I just have some issues that needed to be dealt with first.

>
Vicky: Like?

>
Paul: Issues,okay?

>
Vicky: Okay, ...so why did you pull them off? You pull a boner and schedule them wrong or something?

>
Paul: Did you shoot me by accident?

>
Vicky: Excuse you?

>
Paul: Don't mess with me, Vicky. Did you accidentally shoot me with one of your darts?

>
Vicky: Of coarse not, ...and even if I did they wouldn't work on

you. Just on the living,why? (Paul just sighs heavily) Okay, ...is it safe to say that your questions have something to do with today? (Paul just nods) Okay, ...so what's the common denominator. It's got to be that Daria,..right? You've been hanging around her over the past few years. (Paul just nods)

>
Paul: I had to collect her father recently,I told the guy that he couldn't say goodbye to his wife. But then I turned around and let him say goodbye to his granddaughter personally while only letting him give his daughter a letter,that I delivered myself.

>
Vicky: Have you LOST it?

>
Paul: Not yet,but almost I think. She's a good kid, the granddaughter,I cut up on the grandfather to make her laugh. And then to take her mind off things, ...I showed her what she'd look like when she was an adult.

>
Vicky: MAN,is this not like you. (Feels his forehead)

>
Paul: And then,I realized that I was allowing myself to get too close. So instead of escorting Jake to see his daughter I just hand delivered the letter to her husband so that I could maintain a distance.

>
Vicky: You act like you've never had a friend before. (Jokingly) Or are you afraid that you might care about your job hurting somebody for once? (Paul doesn't reply and after a minute it all begins to sink in) You DO care about her, ...don't you. (Paul doesn't reply) Oh CRAP,you care about her THAT way. (Paul still doesn't reply) When did this happen?

>
Paul: I don't know,I only just realized it when she and her family were getting ready to board the plane.

>
Vicky: What are you going to do?

>
Paul: Nothing,.....if I did something it could unravel her entire family. I pulled them off the plane to buy some time to think about the situation.

>
Vicky: But.....

>
Paul: (glares) I do NOT destroy people's lives for my own benefit,no matter what my personal feelings are. I just know that I wasn't prepared to have to confront her feeling the way I do.

>
Vicky: So what now?

>
Paul: Her family remains the same,but I've suspended Daria's expiration date until I can figure this mess out. I pulled strings for her father,if she asks, I did the same for her out of friendship. Until I set a new date the choice is hers,if she decides before I have a chance to sort things out then I'll have Simon collect her.

>
Vicky: You'll have to confront her eventually,you know that. She'll decide sooner or later.....

>
Paul: I know. But she doesn't ever need to know,I think if I can just watch her be happy from a distance then I'll be okay.

>
Vicky: (looks on at him solemnly) You're a good man to be able to give up someone you care about just for the sake of their happiness. You know that, ...right?

>
Paul: I'm not sure of WHAT I know right now.

>
Vicky: Mind if I ask a question?

>
Paul: (smirks) Shoot.....

>
Vicky: What's it feel like? (Paul turns and scowls at her) What,just because I dish it out doesn't mean I 've experienced it for myself. I think you're the first among us to experience THAT kind. So what's it like.....?

>
Paul: Heart wrenching..... (Smirks) Got something to numb it up so I don't do something stupid?

>
Vicky: You,do something stupid? For a GIRL? Never..... (Paul scowls again) Oh you party pooper,Hang on. (She pulls something resembling a hypospray out of her pocket) The darts don't work on US so it's debatable whether this will, ...but if it does then it should reduce the feeling by about eighty percent. I just hope I don't get in trouble for it,I'm only supposed to use it in case I ever DO miss my target. (She sticks him with it and he closes his eyes for a moment)

>
Paul: Speaking of which,I noticed you lost the bow and arrows. What's with the increased firepower?

>
Vicky: More accurate, ...longer range, ...and best of all. It makes me feel like a sniper,since I don't have to get in close I can take my time with the target.

>
Paul: (rubs his neck) Interesting,listen thanks for your help. Um,this conversation stays between us, right?

>
Vicky: Relax and go check on the waiting room,you've got a lot of work to catch up on. (With that she turns to walk away fading from view as she goes. Paul smiles for a moment and then sighs before walking off himself)

>
(The scene cuts to the next morning, ...Daria and her family are seen greeting Jane and Tim at the docks before boarding the plane for home. It would be a long trip and there was a lot to do in a short time. But if things went smoothly enough they would all be home in time to make the funeral. Since that one time with her daughter,Daria had yet to feel the urge to cry since. Things were strange with her family,and yet they gave her confidence. Helen would do enough crying for the both of them over the family's loss,and over the avoidance of a tragedy that could very well have cost Helen her own sanity. At least that's the way she saw it.)

>
The End.....

>
Comments and suggestions are always welcome.

>I May be contacted at wildgoose81@hotmail.com <div>

19. Lunch Break

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV and Viacom productions.

>
Note: This story is the next in the Unseen Phenomenon Series and takes place fifteen years after "The Empty hourglass".

>

> Lunch break
 By

> Wildgoose

>

>
 The sun shone down on the black asphalt highway on this unseasonably hot and muggy midsummer's day. The haze could be seen rising steadily off the road as Daria leaned forward in her car to turn the air conditioner up yet another notch. "God, ...it's hot as hell today" Daria muttered to herself as she corrected the course of her car having swerved ever so slightly over the double yellow line when she moved to adjust the climate controls. Daria let out a deep sigh as keeping the car straight while moving about in the driver's seat used to be so easy when she was younger. Now as she came ever closer to that middle age mark, Daria found that it was easier to get distracted while driving.

> She moved to adjust her glasses when her attention was again taken from the road and focused on a light flashing in her mirror. "Oh give

me a break,it's too damned hot for this." Daria yelled as she came to realize that the light she noticed in the mirror was being emanated from the patrol car of a state trooper who was now indirectly demanding that she pull the vehicle over to the side. Daria complied and once the car came to a stop she turned the car off and rolled the window down allowing the sultry hot air to invade upon her space and envelope her. The sudden change in temperature, if for just a moment or two, made Daria's lungs feel almost as if they had been filled three quarters of the way with liquid. The air was so thick and muggy, "A person could die of heat stroke at a moments exposure" Daria thought as she regained her ability to breath again.

 The sound of the glove compartment reverberated around the inside of the car as Daria slammed it shut after retrieving her documents. She held them in hand as she watched this uniformed soldier of the highway pace his way cautiously up the side of her car. His face hidden with sunglasses and a mustache, ..."Watch him be one of those strung out vultures who makes his prey jump for the sake of his own amusement" Daria quipped just before the officer reached her window

>
Officer: License, registration and insurance. (barking in an authoritative voice. Daria automatically handed over the documents without thought before stopping to recognize the voice. She turned with a scowl to stare at the officer, studying his uniform until she came to the name placard that read Macleod. Daria smirked and rolled her eyes in amusement as she realized that she was the victim of a practical joke.)

>
Daria: Nicodemus,what the hell are you doing following me? (Nick pulled his glasses off and smiled at his mother as she sat half turned towards him.)

>
Nick: Hey mom, just happened to come up behind you so I figured I'd stop to say hello. It's been about three weeks since I've seen you and all, so you know.....

>
Daria: Uh huh, ...and you'd pull your own mother over just to accomplish that?

>
Nick: Hey, ...sometimes you just do what you have to get some quality family time in.

>
Daria: And this has nothing to do with my driving...?

>
Nick: Well, ...if you want to get technical about it. You did swerve over the lines back there a bit. I COULD give you a ticket for it. But instead I figured I'd just say hi and ask if you wanted to catch lunch. (beat) So how about it?

>
Daria: It's too hot for pizza.....

>
Nick: Well duh,I was thinking along the lines of ice cream and maybe a sandwich. Preferably where they have air-conditioning.

>
Daria: Eh,I appreciate the gesture but ice cream gives me gas anymore. I think I'm becoming lactose intolerant or something.

>
Nick: (smirks evilly) My treat....?

>
Daria: Hey what do you know what,I'm cured. It's a miracle!

>
Nick: Really....?

>
Daria: No,but I figure I can stink your father out of the house later. I owe him big time after all those times he ate oranges and drank Gatorade right before bed. (Nick erupts in laughter as another patrol car happens by and stops to check if assistance is needed. After several moments of reassurance Nick manages to persuade the other officer that all is well and he can go about his business.) Close call?

>
Nick: Nah,that was my watch commander. He was just checking to see if I needed any backup. (beat) So why don't you just follow me then and we'll get you someplace cool.

>
Daria: Deal. (Daria follows her son through the streets and while doing so, she can't help but wonder how in the world Nick could ever have found the desire to become a cop. The job held such a potential for danger, she couldn't stand the thought of him leaving for the job, especially if he got stuck on the night shift. When he first joined the force, she would spend many a night wondering if her son was going to come home on time or if he was going to be delayed by the job yet again. As she recalled, she would jump whenever the phone would ring,absolutely dreading that the person on the other end of the line would be a fellow officer calling to inform her that something had happened to her son. Daria felt relief in the memory for the call never came,and she felt strengthened by that. For some reason,which Daria could never fathom, Duncan would never seem the least bit worried if his son came home late. "The boy can take care of himself, lass." Duncan's voice rang clear through her mind as if he were right in front of her. Daria felt the urge to strangle him every time he said it too. She knew he meant well, but every time he said it the first conclusion she jumped too, that is before rational thought kicked in before actually speaking, was "How can you possibly not care about your own son's well being?" But Daria never allowed herself to say such things, ...she knew better. That would give Duncan all the more room to say that she was becoming more and more like her mother every single day. On a previous occasion Duncan had even mentioned that it was only a matter of time before Daria put on a lookalike of her mothers business clothes. Daria wasn't about to give him the satisfaction of THAT. As far as Daria was concerned, ...she was NOTHING like her mother. (Daria sighed in admittance to herself) At least she TRIED as hard as she could to be nothing like her mother.

> Both cars pulled up to the town Diner and Daria's thoughts on the matter seemed to pause as Nick had already exited his car as she was taking her belt off and he stood there opening her car door for her.)
What are we into the whole chivalry thing now,or do you perceive your mother as being too old and weak to open her own car door?

>
Nick: Give me a break, mom. There's nothing wrong with showing a little respect now is there?

>
Daria: (She arks an eyebrow and smiles) Did I teach you that?

>
Nick: No, ...you taught me sarcasm and wit. Dad taught me manners,but the aforementioned are equally as important. God knows they kept the bullies at bay in all through school.

>
Daria: (smirks) Nice save.

>
Nick: (bows) I try,stepping on ones self has been proven to be hazardous to my health. That I KNOW you taught me.

>
Daria: And I can see it stuck. (Pause in thought)

>
Nick: What...?

>
Daria: (smirks) It's a shame you didn't stop Jane while you were at it, ...she always did manage to make the day complete.

>
Nick: (grumbles) Eh, ...I don't know about that. I think if she asks me to pose for her one more time I'm going to have to shoot her.

>
Daria: That'll never work,we've been threatening to do stuff like that to each other for years.

>
Nick: You never actually had a gun to do it with.

>
Daria: Yea it figures,I never could figure out what it was I was supposed to pick up at the store until now. Note to self, ...pick up dueling pistols on the way home and settle the score with Jane. (Nick laughs as they enter the establishment and take a booth near the window. They order and Daria finds her mind beginning to wander again as she studies his face. She had never recognized him initially what with that mustache and those glasses, ...she couldn't help but wonder when the hell he'd actually grown that thing. And for gods sake,why did he have to do it in the summer? Spoken like a true mom Daria thought as she mused on all things similar she'd said to the kids in the past. Voices passed through her mind in time with the images of her memories. She recalled clearly encouraging a seven year old Ariel to fight back against her roughhousing brother. And then scolding Nick by telling him not to pick on his sister. She could have sworn it was her mother talking at that time,to Daria it almost sounded like Helen's voice. Other past motherly sayings rang through her mind as she waited with her son. The signs of parenthood laced her past like battle scars. "Don't do that, ..don't stay out too late, ...you're grounded,..Daria had said them all. Just as her mother had before her,she found herself wondering how often her children would say such things to their own children, if they ever had any. Nicks voice managed to cut it's way though Daria's wandering mind.)

>
Nick: You okay mom,you look like you're zoning out on me?

>
Daria: Huh,oh yea. I'm fine, ...just thinking. Just got a lot on my mind I guess, ...so much stuff to do.

>
Nick: Yea, ...I know what you mean. I can't believe the lower half of the food chain are halfway through high school.

>
Daria: (scowls) Don't talk about your younger siblings like that. They're not the bottom half of anything.

>
Nick: I know mom, ...I'm just messing with them like I always have. It's like,my duty as the oldest son. You know.....?

>
Daria: My ONLY son,how can you be the oldest son if there are no males in the family younger than you?

>
Nick: (rolls his eyes) Now are you just being literal about it,or are you indirectly being proud of me?

>
Daria: (dryly) Pick one. (Nick chuckles to himself as the food arrives. Daria picks up her sandwich and takes a bite. Ham on dry toast, just like she'd always had in the past and likely to the end of her days. A thought that could be read on Nick's face as he watched his mother eat. He wouldn't have it any other way.)

>
(Daria studied her sons face,she knew what he was thinking about how she always ate the same thing. She never tired of it,Daria never liked to eat a heavy lunch. Just enough to hold her over until dinner. That was always heavy,most of the time Duncan did the cooking unless he was unable to be home in time. And he did love to cook up a storm. Daria found herself laughing out loud as she remembered the time Duncan had shooed Helen out of her own kitchen at Christmas time because she was in danger of ruining a good meal and because she was getting in Duncan's way.)

>
Nick: What's so funny?

>
Daria: I'm just laughing at the peculiar shape of memory lane.

>
Nick: Sure it's not the yellow brick road?

>
Daria: Watch it, or I'll drop a house on you.

>
Nick: Don't you mean my sister? That would be much more

preferable.

>
Daria: They're my memories,I make up the consequences.

(Nicks laughs)

>
Nick: Speaking of memories,do you remember when we were little? Just before Grandpop Morgendorffer passed away,Ariel had that dream that she was real tall when she grew up?

>
Daria: And she was right too,she turned into a doppelganger of your aunt Maria.

>
Nick: (nods his head) With exception that Ariel was born sighted. How DID Ariel manage to be born with red hair? You have brown,and dad has black.

>
Daria: Traits sometimes skip a generation or two, ...red hair runs on both sides of the family. And the height,that's your fathers side all the way.

>
Nick: God I had to hear it all through school about having a giant for a sister. "Hey Nick, ...check her shoes to see if she's stepped on anyone yet."

>
Daria: (sighs) Six foot four at age fourteen,had to be rough. (clears her throat) But as I recall,you got in many a scuffle in her defense.

>
Nick: Hey,sometimes you've got to kick a little ass for the sake of the family. Besides,I did enjoy it so. (Daria laughs)

>
(The sound of Nicks radio is heard beneath the table as a call comes through about an officer needing back up. Nick curses as he gets up from the table in preparation to leave.)

>
Nick: I'm sorry mom,I've got to go. We'll do this again soon, I promise. (He puts down more than enough money to cover the bill on the table.) I'll call you tonight, okay. (Daria finds herself mumbling as if in the presence of Trent when she was younger)

>
Daria: Mmmph.....bye. (Beat) Take care of yourself.....
(Daria couldn't believe she'd found the strength to belt that out after the mumbled goodbye. She'd never said that in the past, ...only in her mind every time Nick would leave for work before he got his own place. Nick turned in the doorway and looked back at his mother in amazement. He could feel twenty years of emphasis on each word,and he felt himself choke up as they reverberated in his mind. He smiled to her and then left before his mother could see a tear come to his eye. Daria watched through the window as her son climbed back into his patrol car, flicked on the roof lights and tore ass out of the parking lot. She felt anxious at first as she always did, but calmed at a peculiar feeling. She'd gotten it before,it was familiar, that of a presence. She wasn't sure who it was,but definitely not Quinn. Quinn always seemed to offer up a warm jovial feeling when she was in the vicinity and through her experiences in the past Daria knew to acknowledge those feelings for what they were. But this one always felt of contentedness,and for some strange reason whenever she felt it, no matter how grave the circumstances, nothing bad would ever happen to either her or her family. And although she couldn't explain it,she felt relief as for the presence of whomever this was meant that her son would return home safely from whatever dangers he was heading into.)

>
As Daria continued to watch her son leave, the scene pulls back to behind her maybe a few yards away,in the shadows noticed by no one, stood a tall man with long hair tied back in a pony tail, and as his floor length over coat swayed in the breeze generated by the ceiling fans above, he too watched. Not the son leaving as so much the sons mother smiling at reassurance.

>
The End.....

>
Comments and suggestions are always welcome, ...I may be reached at wildgoose81@hotmail.com

20. Season's End

Disclaimer: Daria and all related characters are the property of MTV and Viacom productions

>

> Seasons End
 By

> Wildgoose

>
 It had been a rather mild winter this year, not very cold and hardly any snow at all. A relief Daria thought as she walked down the side walk from the store to her home, she didn't mind the cold weather but it made it so damned hard to get around or to get anything done by herself. Being stuck in the house was almost maddening at times. Daria hated that, being stuck home alone without anyone to talk to, or to hold on to was at times almost too much for her to bear. So she tried to get out and about as much as she could in her old age, despite warnings and lectures that were almost constantly given to her by her doctor and by her own children. "I can get around on my own just fine dammit, I'm no highschool teenager on a field trip anymore but I'll be damned if my own family is to become my warden" she said pulling her Jacket a little tighter as she walked.

> After a long walk, one that seemed to get longer every day she made it, Daria finally reached her home and sighed in relief as she closed the door behind her and felt the warmth of the heater around her as she let herself out of her winter jacket and sat down in her chair in front of the computer desk that had served her for so long, almost eighty years in fact. Daria looked up at the computer screen before turning it on to notice her reflection in the screen, she stopped and stared for a long moment at her grayish white hair and each little wrinkle that she had earned through her years. " Umph heheh, when nine hundred years old YOU reach, look as good you will not." She said doing her best Yoda impression for the sake of her own amusement. Daria pressed the button on the monitor and the computer came to life, beeping and chiming as it carried out it's various functions during the boot up process. Once the computer was finished with it's business Daria then felt it was high time that she got on with hers, she clicked on the icon that said my journal.
 A rather large file it was too, damn near ninety five years of her deepest thoughts and emotions from her first day at kindergarten to her wedding night to her latest entry yesterday, all of it was transcribed her into this digital version of the notebooks she once kept hidden under her bed. She wasn't foolish though, she knew the hard drive wasn't the safest place to keep her journal so she backed the whole thing up every few days onto a one hundred gig floppy, more than enough space then she'll ever need for her journal she thought. Daria sighed tiredly as she began to type into her journal her latest entry. "It's been a long life" She wrote, "My one hundredth birthday was a few days ago as I noted on that day in this journal, god I never thought I would live this long. I've outlived everybody who was ever close and dear to me, frankly I don't know how I manage to go from day to day with no friends to talk to. Sure my family stops by regularly to check up on me and to do their best to keep me company....but they aren't the friends I once had. Nothing could ever replace friends like that, they themselves are like a family. One that comes MAYBE once in a life time if your lucky.

> My best friend Jane Lane has been gone now, god it must be going on

twenty years. I still can't believe it, the image of her dropping to the floor in front of her easel from a stroke haunts me at least a couple of times a year. At times I feel almost as though I want to join her, I'm so alone here now. My husband, well he died maybe five years before Jane did. If it weren't for her I don't know how I ever would have made it through that, My parents funerals were a piece of cake compared to that. But Jane was there for me when I needed her, she always was. "Till we come to bad ends we're freakin' friends", Lyrics from one of Trent's old songs. Truer words I've never heard in my life."

I Did manage to come across one old friend today, one I haven't seen since I was a teenager, and also one who would seriously make you wonder if his appearance was a blessing or a warning to another friend, Especially at my age. His name is Paul, I remember him one because he has always shown up well dressed despite the fact that he always wears the same outfit, and two...he's the angel of death. Go figure right? He strolled up to me while I was sitting on a bench in the park and I have to admit that when I saw him I thought I was going to have a heart attack, but I calmed significantly when he just sat down beside me and started to talk to me. Asking me how I've been and so forth, I replied with my age old sarcasm and we shared a few laughs. I stopped joking for a moment when I actually thought of the possibility that everyone passing by would think I was talking to myself and that I had gone senile. God, like I need that at my age.

> Paul noticed my awkwardness and assured me that everyone else was being allowed to see him as well for the sake of my own comfort. I wasn't sure exactly how I should take that but let it slide non the less. He talked to me of friends and family long past and that when he made it known that he was going to pay me a social call they all asked about me, I have to admit my heart almost melted at that point as it felt so good to know that no one had forgotten about me. It was at that point that I decided to get down to business and asked him why I had lived for so long when the times for all of my friends and family had come so long ago. Paul took a solemn look upon himself and confessed a truth to me dating all the way back to Quinn's murder eighty some years ago.
 "I erased your date in my computer a long time ago" He stated, I couldn't help but like you as a friend which is extremely rare in my profession, and since I granted your father a favor way back when he had his first heart attack...why should I leave you out?." "What kind of favor is that?" I asked him, His only reply was "so that YOU might choose when, not anyone else." Words that just sank into my soul as I contemplated their meaning, basically what he was telling me was that I could have been run over by a steam roller and If I didn't feel like going at the time then I would recover and go on with life. Great, now all I need is for him to tell me that I have to run around with a sword cutting people's heads off and yelling there can be only one. Damn, I would have heard an earful from my belated husband Duncan. He hated those jokes with a passion. I'm tired I told him, I have no friends here anymore. I have my grandchildren and great grandchildren and I love them a great deal, but they aren't the same as those I cared about when I was young. Paul looked at me with understanding seeing that his favor was now becoming a burden. "You decide when,I'll be around when you do." With that he got up and walked away fading more and more with each step he took. That was the last I saw of him so far, but I know I'll see him again.

> I'm going to call my granddaughter as soon as I'm done here and ask her to come over in the morning. I'll feed her some B.S story about wanting to go shopping with her or something, she's just like Quinn was in some ways I guess. My only hope at this moment is that someone

in my family finds this journal and does something productive with my memories, write a book with them or pass them on in some way, basically so that the so called misery chick, as I was known as by some in high school, will never be forgotten. And maybe my thoughts will serve as inspiration or even some sort of lesson for a future cynic and writer.
 Daria saved her work and then backed it up before logging off the computer for the night, she then gave her granddaughter a call. Needless to say the girl was only too happy to have the chance to go out shopping, and she didn't seem to care about what it was that they would be shopping for. Daria said her goodbye's to her granddaughter and hung up the phone so that she might get ready for bed. She was tired today, more so than usual, so Daria drank her usual cup of tea before bed and walked into her room to climb under the covers. Daria closed her eyes and fell to sleep even though it was still light out, and more quickly than she had thought as she normally tossed and turned a little bit trying to get comfortable so as not to cut off her circulation anywhere. Daylight faded to evening and evening into nighttime, Daria still remained asleep and at some point during the course of the night....Daria took her last breath, and died.

>
 Needless to say Daria's family grieved deeply at her loss, they gave her a beautiful funeral. One that was dignified and respectful, Daria was proud as she watched from a distance as she stood beside her best friends Jane and Trent, her husband Duncan, as well as Quinn and the rest of the Morgendorffer family, even aunt Amy. She was finally reunited with those who meant most to her.

>
 The epitaph on Daria's stone that was placed on the grave some time later read,

>Here Lies Daria Morgendorffer Macleod
Great friend, Loving daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother

>You are an inspiration in our hearts and you're memory shall live forever
Born November 17, 1983 ~ Died November 20, 2083

End
file.